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ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE OF GENRE-BASED APPROACH  
AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS

BY

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RESEARCH STUDY

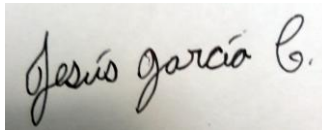
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AFFIDAVIT

I, Jesús García, hereby declare that this master's thesis has not been previously presented as a degree requirement, either in the same style or with variations, in this or any other university.

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored surface. The signature reads "Jesús García C." in a cursive script.

JESUS FERNANDO GARCIA CASTRO

## **Abstract**

The following study is a gathering of data and collaborative work by learners and researcher from the language center Hablemos Speak. The approach which was used in this research the genre-based approach along with online engaging tools were chosen due to the fact that all of the learners use digital tools at their workplace.

Learners make use of tools such as email, office suit among others, the online engaging tools that were chosen for this study were email and blog. Email because all learners use this tool at their workplace, learners use the same genre but with different purpose this means that the guidelines or instruction which they follow vary depending on the goal. As for blogs this was chosen since not all learners have the same occupation, this means that researcher decided to go forward this tool in order to have a variation during the elaboration of the study.

In the following chapters it will be shown the research cycle, methodology, and different pedagogical sequences along with the results and conclusions of the study.

### ***Dedication page***

This work is dedicated first of all to my parents who supported me in every aspect during the elaboration of this research; second, to my fiancée whose love and patience helped throughout the Master program; and last but not least to my tutor who drew the path that I followed in order to accomplish this.

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## **Introduction**

English has become the most widely spread used language specially when talking about business and cultural exchange. Due to the fact that English is the mother tongue of two important world power countries such as The United States and the UK, throughout the world more and more language-based academic institutions have begun to spread. The type of school where the research is taking place is a Language Center, it is called Hablemos Speak, and it is located in the city of Barranquilla, Atlántico. Different languages are taught in this language center but currently English and French are the ones that are being taught. There is not a specific schedule due to the fact that it offers customized classes with groups of no more than 8 students.

This research is about the low sufficiency related to the writing skills at the language center Hablemos Speak, this has been a problem in this institution due to the fact that the methodology which is used in the language center is more focused in the listening and speaking skills than in the reading and writing skills, these lasts skills are not practiced quite often, in part this is a consequence of the methodology because every group should follow a pace, this means that by a specific date a group should be in a specific unit, so many writing exercises are skipped due to the fact that they take more than half lesson.

This document is divided in 8 parts, the Introduction, where a short abstract of the research is presented, what it is about, where it was done. Then comes the Rationale, in this part it is presented why the study is relevant to the problems found in the classroom, the following part is the Description of the context, here a description of the setting is done, what the location of the institution is, how the classrooms are, and most important a description of the group, who make part of the group and what their occupation is, then is the Description of the problem, here as the heading implies is the description of the problem which was found in the classroom, after this section comes the research question and



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objectives section, in this part of the study is stated the research question that is raised from the observation of the problems and the research objectives which are related to the main question, next comes the theoretical frame work section, here is one the most important parts of the study because readers can find the basis of this research and the theories that support it, then comes the Results and conclusions section where the researcher shares a discussion of the findings and the implications for the context and future research.

Learning a second language is a task that most professionals do in order to achieve a specific personal or work related goal, e.g. the engineer that needs to learn English in order to receive a promotion; there are different situations that show how someone can be encouraged or engaged with the learning of an L2; the fact that the language which is used by the learners, they feel more confident while using engaging online tools for writing.

English has impacted the world greatly thanks to globalization (Crystal, 2003) As a result, for a person to participate in the global market or for being part of the competition he or she has to expand his/her communicative abilities in a second language. According to Hyland (2003), writing is usually seen as one of the top challenging aspects of second language learning and its different obstacles when having writing production of different type of texts can come from the fact that students need to understand the similarities and differences of the many linguistic features that a text has, not just its purpose.

Research in this area has covered a whole wide range of theories related to language learning; for example, how the process of SLA underpins certain areas in the brain that have to do with short-term and long-term memory, how the brain reacts when paying attention consciously to the L2. Currently, there are many factors which affect L2 learning. One of these factors is age. Different theories state that age is an important factor related to the SLA, this hypothesis is known as Critical Period Hypothesis.

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Lenneberg (1967) states that L2 acquisition is easier before the individual reaches puberty, if the individual passes this barrier many aspects of the language can be learned, but not mastered. This phenomenon usually happens in the Language Center because most of the students are adults, but an interesting fact is that many of the students have had bilingual education, this explains why some features can be mastered by some students and not by others.

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### **Rationale**

According to Kaufman (2016), English is the most widespread used language around the world, be it for doing business, meeting people, doing research. It is evident that this language connects the world. This research is relevant due to the fact that students have shown, throughout the course, that their writing skill is weak. Also, writing has proven to be highly necessary for this particular group of students because they are professionals who must write different types of documents such as: e-mails, reports, logs, studies, case studies, medical histories, among others. There is a wide range of reasons why English is important nowadays. They can be personal, academic, work-related, or even social. The English language is the one of the best tools to advance or go ahead in life. Languages mean opportunities; in other words, learning a second language, in this case English language, opens the doors to new opportunities.

This research is original because there have been very few studies on the writing aspect making use of the genre-approach, and online engaging tools running on open source O.S.

### **Description of the context**

The setting is an institution specialized in the teaching of foreign languages named Speak Language Center; this institution has covenants with different enterprises in the city of Barranquilla to teach English to their employees. The language center makes use of its own teaching methodology, which emphasizes on communication, more specifically on oral communication. The writing aspect is also taken into account, but it does not have the same priority as the other language skills. This is one of the main problems, which results in students having poor writing production. The group chosen for this research is a level III group. They use the book Four Corners 3. This group is conformed by 5 adults: three engineers, an accountant, and a microbiologist.

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### **Description of the problem**

The language center has achieved its main goal, which is teaching communicative English. This is evident in the fact that when students get to the last level, they are able to express their ideas in a correct way, using the different grammar structures and vocabulary, which they have studied throughout the English course. Besides taking into account the scores which they obtain throughout their level, and the main final assessment which is based on the Four Corners text-book, we can clearly see that the goal is achieved. In spite of all this, the writing aspect is still a problem. Students themselves, when they are in the higher levels, demand for more writing production activities.

A situational constraint which can affect the normal development of the classes, are the different schedules that students have. This happens mainly because they all have different responsibilities and schedules. Their needs depend on their different contexts. Basically they are all signed in the regular English course, which is taught at the language center. Some of the students are professionals in fields, such as engineering, business administration, education, among others.

The age of the students goes from 15 to 38 years old. Most of the students are professionals or are studying a professional career. Students usually have a great experience related to the learning of an L2 more specifically English at Speak Language Center. Students from 3<sup>rd</sup> level on begin to feel more and more comfortable when speaking in English, when making use of the language to communicate and/or to express ideas using student-student interaction as well as student-teacher interaction. On the other hand, when talking about the writing skills of the students, they do not feel as confident as with their speaking skill. As the English course emphasizes on the speaking skills, the writing skill is not as reinforced as the other three. This can be seen in their English classes where the verbal communication is used more often. The problem is revealed when students are evaluated in order to see their progress

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in the English language, the exams have a writing section where students usually fail when expressing their thoughts through a piece of paper, and they usually do it as if they were speaking face to face to another person.

The online engaging tools play an important role in the life of learners because they use different tools that are related to a web service from their work, or when using text-processors and this is something that happens regularly due to the fact that nowadays it is common to be immerse in a digital world, and most of the writing work is done using online tools.

With all of the description previously mentioned, at the language center Speak, it is highly important that students work on their writing skills. One of the main reasons is that they are professionals and, as such, they should have a writing skill that is consistent with their education level. Considering the setting described in this chapter this research aims at enhancing the writing skills of students of level III through the use of the genre-approach to writing, and online engaging tools.

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## **Research Question and Objectives**

This section of the paper presents the main question, which guides this research study, as well as the general and specific objectives, which are directly connected to the question.

### **Research question**

How may the genre approach to writing, combined with online engaging tools, help to improve students' writing skills in a level 3 at Speak Language Center?

### **Research objectives:**

#### **General:**

Improve students' writing skills through the use of the genre-based approach and online engaging tools.

#### **Specific:**

- Analyze how the application of a framework for a genre-based approach can improve students' writing performance.
- Identify the aspects of students' writing that are enhanced by the use of the genre-approach and online engaging tools.
- Determine whether students' engagement and writing production is increased by using online tools.

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### **Theoretical Framework**

This section presents the theoretical background that supports this research project. The main theories included here are the writing skills, Genre-based approach and engaging tools that are related to the improvement of learners' writing skills. Throughout the study, different engaging tools, more specifically, technological tools will be used to encourage the writing domain in the English course at the language center. As previously mentioned, the focus of the English course is on oral communication. As a result, learners have poor written production.

In the next paragraphs, I will explain what writing is, the main components of the genre approach to writing, and the role of technological tools involved in this proposal.

### **What is writing?**

Writing is a very important skill for humans. Through the use of writing, thoughts, ideas, and concepts can be transferred from one person to the other, or others. It is a medium of communication, which can connect civilizations and even generations. In order to use the English language as such, different language skills should be set into practice ever since the beginning of the English course, this is done with the purpose of carrying out a good second language acquisition.

Writing is a skill that is closely or directly related to cognition. It is an essential component of human communication. Most of the cultures or communities around the world have left a mark in time, be on rocks, on walls, on books, etcetera. Scientists and historians both agree that writing is a fundamental factor in the development of a culture due to the fact that this process facilitates a logical or linear presentation of ideas. It is a way to express or communicate an idea within a community and illustrates the development rate of a group (Langer & Applebee, 1987). Writing well is a must for every person in this society, it is the presentation card that everyone shows unconsciously and one way of

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demonstrating this is through the arguments which are written, the thoughts of the students organized and embedded in a text.

Humans use writing to express an idea, which usually has a purpose. Through writing ideas can be written down and organized in order to show one's point of view. Argument is the core of critical thinking, the skill to identify, observe, criticize; it all comes bundled within an argument, in real life good arguments come from the process of observation and of the object which is being analyzed (Hillocks, 2010). Writing is one of the best ways to show a valid argument in a more formal manner. As a social species we are leaned to make meanings, this is done through our interpretation of 'signs', according to Peirce, 'we think only in signs' (Peirce, 1931-58, p.2.302) signs take the shape thoughts into words, sounds, images, flavours, odour, gestures, objects, but these things do not have a meaning, they become signs once the speaker invest a meaning in them. 'Nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign', States Peirce (Peirce, 1931-58; p.2.172). Anything has the possibility to be understood as a sign as long as it is interpreted as 'signifying' something or referring to something. Another concept of sign is that of Saussure, he gave a two-part model of sign, he defined a sign as a composition of a 'signifier' (signifiant) - the form which the sign takes; and the 'signified' (signifié) - the concept it represents. *Sign* is the final product of the association of the signifier with the signified (Saussure, F; 1916) we have the example of the word **open**:

- Signifier: the word open.
- Signified concept: that the shop is open for business.



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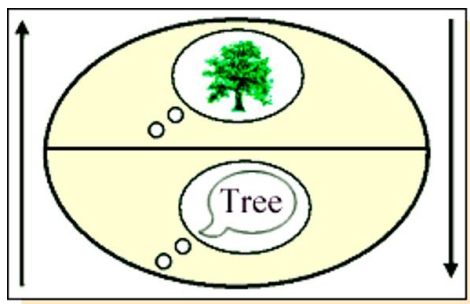


Figure 1. Signified/signifier representation. (Saussure, 1983)

Currently the ‘Saussurean’ model has become more materialistic than that of Saussure. The *signifier* is usually seen as material (or physical) form of the sign, it’s something that can be touched, seen, smelt or tasted. According to Saussure (1916) the signifier and signified are psychological or subjective.

Writing a word or a letter can also be seen as a sign (Saussure, 1916) he named it *image acoustique* (‘Sound-acoustique’) according to him writing is a second type, separate, dependent but comparable sign system. Within this system of signs, a signifier such as the letter ‘m’ can signify a sound rather than a concept. Different theorists have argued that the ‘signifier’ is usually set apart from the signified and as such it has a real independence (Lechte, 1994).

Even though linguists state that a signifier is linked to a signified, Saussurean semioticians highlight that there is not a need, direct, intrinsic, or inevitable between both signifier and signified. Saussure used the *arbitrariness* concept of sign (Saussure, 1916) the link between signifier and signified, having language as the most important sign system. The concept of arbitrariness of linguistic is not new; Aristotle had once noted that ‘there cannot be a natural connection between a sound in any language and what it signified’ just like (Richards, 1932) stated.

### Development of Writing Skill

Different researchers perceive the development of writing skills through different stages,

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writing coherent and consistent texts is a quite difficult task for a regular person, writing a long text at an advanced level requires different aspects of the language system, it is a challenge to our cognitive system because it makes use of memory and thinking as well, this happens because when writing you make use of all the knowledge the writer has in his/her long-term memory. Learning how to create a text is conceived as a cultural task, besides different types of knowledge related to text content and discourse has to be accessible in a long-term memory otherwise it stays inert (Kellogg; 1994). Next it will be shown a graphic related to the macro-stages in the cognitive development of writing skills.

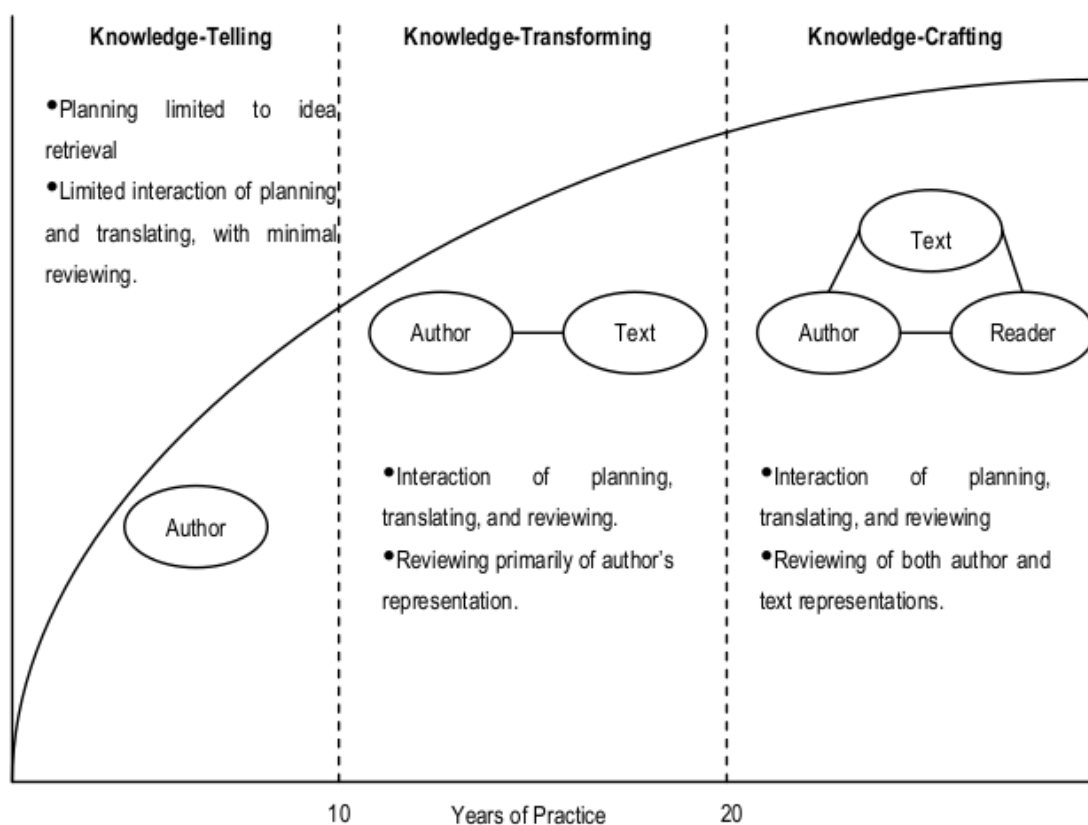


Figure 2. Macro-stages in the cognitive development of writing skills

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Writing skills are perceived as a continuously improving activity.

### **Knowledge-telling**

The first stage of knowledge-telling involves creating or regaining what the author wants to express. Usually in this first stage learners have acquired a mind theory that permits them to check different perspectives (Wellman, 1990; Wellman, Cross, & Watson, 2001). It seems as if the representation of the text from the writer says to him or her, how the prospective reader might understand. As the learner develops texts representation and reader representation, progressively they become more effective. It is assumed that the representations done through signs or writing has to be built-up by the writer stabled so that he or she can hold these representations in working memory (McCutchen; 1996)

### **What is the Genre Approach?**

The word *genre* comes from the French language and its meaning is ‘form’ or ‘type’. This means that it is a noun which gives the idea of sorting or classifying a specific type of writing, in other areas such as Biology the word genre has a meaning related to ‘genus’ this is for flora and fauna (Stokes, 2006; Himawan, 2007). The word genre is used in different fields such as film, music, literature, etc. when it comes to music genre. For example, Heavy Metal, the instruments, the voice, everything should follow a model that has been previously stated. Nowadays the use of this term has been widely accepted in linguistic studies; it has been recently used in the field of linguistic studies and is based on Systemic Functional Linguistic-SFL (Halliday, 1978; Swales, 1990; Hyland, 2003).

Now when referring to genre in linguistics, Martin (1999) states that genre is basically an activity where two or more individuals participate with an orienting goal in order to express ideas.

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Swales (1990) defines it in a more basic form, he states that genre is the abstract formalization of the concrete types of texts which can be described as typical representations of the use of language in specific communicative events. As EFL teachers, it is mandatory to encourage learners in writing. This is very difficult though. One of the main variables that cause this phenomenon is engagement or the lack of it, in different writing exercises, students do not seem to be encouraged by their teacher to participate actively in classes.

The Genre Approach gained credibility and popularity mainly due to the fact that it facilitates the writing or production of a text by following a model. This is done taking into account the interests of the students so that a varied number of texts in different fields can be worked or created. Derewianka (1992) states that genre has a structure or scheme depending on the text or the purpose. Texts vary depending on their purpose and context. Basically, the genre-approach is the theory of how language is used.

According to Byram (2004), *genre* in linguistics is language specifically set up with the use of guidelines or instructions on how to perform an activity, essay, report, etcetera. Another definition for *genre* comes from Swales (1990). He defines it as “a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes” (p. 58). This concept tells us that there are certain pre-defined conventions or rules that go along with the writer’s purpose. This is relevant for the students of the language center Speak, who are engineers, chemists, and biologists, and who have to write specific texts that go along with their area of expertise.

There are different advantages and disadvantages when using the genre-based approach in writing. Swales (1990) stated that rhetorical instruction is a very important aspect in teaching writing this means that depending on the context and type of text, genre improves and brings functional properties. Learners are already contextualized; this means that prior to writing, there are instructions

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or guidelines which should be followed taking into account the genre being used, since they acknowledge different relationships between terms and grammar structures. Genre has advantages that are very useful and as such it is worthy to point out some, such as the fact that it shows learners how meaningful writing is, its formal and functional properties (Bhatia; 1993). This means that the rhetorical implications such as structure, function, and goal have a common pattern. This pattern has background knowledge due to the fact that it is related to their field where different terminology can be the same or similar and the context in which they are located plays an important part in this.

Kay and Dudley-Evans (1998) stated that in one of their experimental case studies they found out that when having knowledge about how structured a formal letter should be, learners showed more confidence. They stated that the writing exercises are more difficult than others and students who are in a low level feel more relaxed and confident when having guidelines or something which they can rely on.

Different researchers agree that genre-approach encourages learners to play their part in the world around them, having them contextualized really brings good advantages. However, some proponents say that the genre approach suits better to students in beginner level or intermediate instead of those at advanced levels. “There is no doubt that writing tasks can be more demanding than other language skills, so students at low level of proficiency absolutely need something that they can rely on since they have little exposure to English writing” (Kay & Dudley-Evans, 1998, p. 310).

Despite the fact that this approach really encourages students to produce texts with total confidence since they are usually contextualized, there are two important disadvantages: one is that this approach underestimates both learners and their skills, by giving them what Byram (2004) calls a “framework of guided instructions”. Swales (1990) also talks about conventions, which are the different characteristics and subjects that narrow the vocabulary and some structures depending on the

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case. For beginners, this can be seen as an advantage; but for advanced students, sometimes they feel underestimated when they have to follow a model and use some vocabulary that is demanded for the topic but these two are very well known by them.

This is a usual situation at Speak Language Center due to the fact that most of the students have a professional career as a result their ESL progress can be seen throughout their output. The structural features upon which Genre is based on contain structural and linguistic standards that are used by learners. Paltridge (2007) states that different writing conventions would not be noticeable by students if it were not highlighted, the teacher guides, shows, make the students deconstruct and construct the genre, by doing so this makes them aware.

Researchers such as Christie (1999) claim that when learners are allowed to correct by themselves depending on the context and on the genre, they may find this labyrinthine and use their own discourse instead.

Different researchers have argued about the beneficial aspects of using the genre approach to teach writing. According to Byram (2004), there are two main factors that can affect in a non-positive way the learning process, one is that Genre undervalues the skills of the learners to produce literature or content and the other factor is that Genre disregards the self-sufficiency of the learners, that is that learners may get used to having supervision, this may turn into a problem due to the fact that when students get immersed in an English speaking society the probability of using their mother tongue gets reduced. This means that when putting specific genre features and structured text or context, learners have problems finding the real meaning or purpose in other different type of texts this happens due to the specified aspects which are pointed out depending on the genre.

Badger and White (2000) stated that genre approach can limit the creativity of students about content and is criticized due to the fact that it overlooks the natural ways of learning. In spite of the

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different disadvantages the genre-approach is widely used and recommended for beginner students and ESP programs as well due to the fact that by following guidelines or instructions which are given by a specific type of text, students gain more confidence and practice their writing skills. By following a path or guidelines the process of writing is becoming easier, a very important advantage is that by having Genre students are contextualized and have an idea prior to writing, this means that time can be saved and invested in class.

Many researchers state that genre states clearly its most common processes, steps, guidelines or procedures. Martin (1999) states that genre as an approach to writing is taught following steps or procedures in order to achieve a goal. He proposes a model for teaching writing through the use of genre, and it has three stages, a) modeling, b) deconstruction c) language understanding. These processes follow a teaching cycle.

### **1) Modeling a text**

In this part there are three elements that should be taken into account in order to have a proper modeling of a text.

- a) The text chosen by the teacher or students has to be related to the current market and their needs.
- b) Both teacher and learners read, analyze, and even manipulate the text.
- c) Learners are guided in order to comprehend the function of the text, its communicative intention.
- d) Learners study the unknown vocabulary of a specific Genre model, grammar or structure pattern.

### **2) Joint negotiation of text**

This is a more practical stage because learners begin to do practical and operational things related to text writing, here learners still receive guidance from the teacher; there are three stages how joint construction is implemented.

- a) Learners reconstruct the genre given, paraphrasing, using synonyms, and grammatical patterns with

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their vocabulary.

b) There is a continuous guidance by the teacher, this encourages learners to discuss and comprehends the genre with the vocabulary used.

c) A very important step is to check modeling and joint construction, that everything is clear before moving to the next stage.

### 3) Independent construction of a text

After having contextualized learners, having understood and experienced the stages one and two, learners are demanded to create a text using the same genre which has been object of study, the teacher has to be sure that learners do not have flaws in the genre being taught and that vocabulary is well understood as well as the communicative intention, structure and grammar patterns related to the genre. In order to have a picture of the teaching cycle, below there is a figure of the “wheel” model (Callaghan & Rothery, 1988).

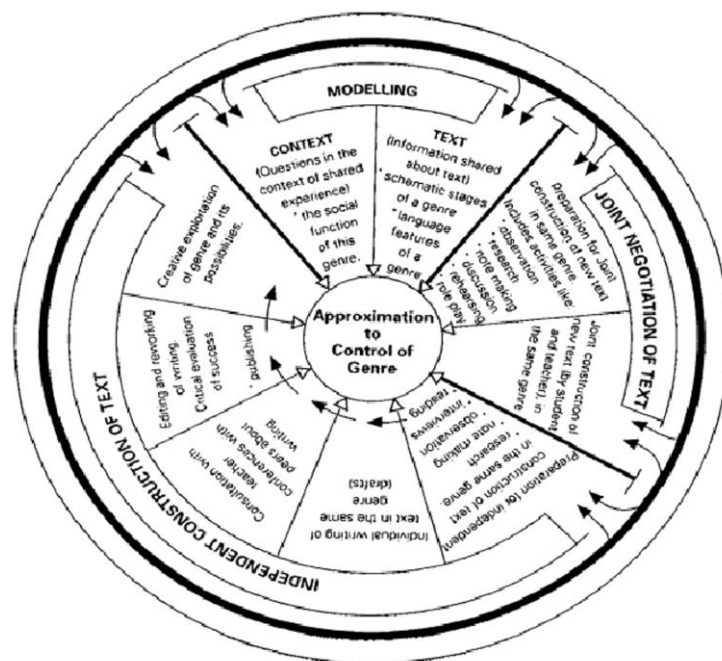


Figure 3. The ‘wheel’ model (Callaghan & Rothery, 1988)



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### **Use of technology in education**

Teaching methodologies, like education in general, has evolved during the last century and the beginning of this one. New technologies have changed the whole perspective of a four-walled class. Devices such as television, computers, smart boards, Internet, tablets, and portable devices, which have a UI (user interface), can be used as tools in order to encourage students to find education more pleasant. Although there are opposite thoughts related to these theories, according to Cuban (2001) traditional teaching methods continue to prevail over new technologies.

Different authors, such as Crystal (1997), agree on the fact that English is the most popular learned and taught second language. Currently the new generation of learners has had contact with the language ~~be~~ through T.V., Internet or any device.

Nowadays, English as a second language is taught in context. This takes into communication. This is because language learning is seen as an act of social learning or in particular communities (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Gee, 1996). This means that second language learning is an activity, which implies a social aspect. From this perspective, it can be said that students need more and more chances for expressing themselves in authentic interaction. With the use of technology, these opportunities increase, because it can potentialize learning, reinforce language skills, and, at same time shorten social and cultural hegemonies. According to Rassool (2000), this helps to encourage students to be in a social environment suitable for language learning.

With the new technological advances, second language acquisition is no longer in a four-walled space. Digital tools are another way of breaking those physical boundaries and make in a new, more comprehensive way possible for the teacher and student to be connected. Lindenau (1984) stated that we were upon the brink of a microelectronic change or evolution in the world of pedagogy, more specifically in Second Language Acquisition. He also pointed out that turning the back to this is not

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wise due to the fact that teaching should follow current trends. This does not mean that the traditional way of blackboard, marker and a classroom will not work anymore, but ignoring the coming of these different digital tools would decrease the engagement of students. Leask (2001) stated that the use of technology-mediated learning increases the level of engagement and improves second language learning, especially when these tools and tasks are integrated, so that they are used in context.

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### **State of the Art**

This section presents a review of different studies that have been carried out in the last 10 years regarding the genre approach to teach writing, as well as the use of technology to improve writing skills, or a combination of both. Firstly, studies related to the use of genre approach and technology will be discussed. Secondly, some interesting studies regarding the genre approach will be presented. Some research carried out in the Colombian context will also be considered in this review.

The first study is called ‘The Role of Genre-Based Activities in the Writing of Argumentative Essays in EFL’ (Chala & Chapeton, 2013). This study discusses the results, which were carried out by a group of pre-selected teachers from a Colombian university. According to what can be read in it, the main purpose is to go beyond the linguistic features of a language through the use of guidance or genre-based activities and the comprehension of written language as a situational social practice. This means that guidance or instructional features are important depending on the context. The results showed that genre-based activities and material improves the confidence of the students and as a result their attitude towards writing in English ameliorates. The study highlights the importance of dialogic interaction in order to provide scaffolding opportunities, of understanding writing as a process, and of the use of samples and explicit instruction to facilitate writing.

There is another interesting study related to online tools and genre with writing, its name is: ‘Short story student-writers: active roles in writing through the use of e-portfolio dossier’ (Cuesta, 2000). This study talks about the use of e-portfolio, which is an online tool that helps to create academic portfolios for students. This research took place in Bogotá, Colombia and it began thanks to the need of a group of students to have instructional guides when writing. This type of instructional guidance is very common in genre-based teaching. Students had to use the e-portfolio dossier, this was a way to engage them in short-story writing, an example of how students used it is as a diary, and

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students were from senior year. Students used an instructional method when following instructions. According to the results of this article students evolved from a passive to an active status and this enabled learners to become decision makers and critical thinkers not just on their learning but on their writing production.

Another quite interesting study is called “A Virtual Room to Enhance Writing Skills in the EFL Class” (Ochoa & Medina, 2013). The purpose of the study was to find out to what extent the use of technology can improve the writing skills of students (technologies such as Virtual rooms). The students used as tool wikispace, which is a blog-type of webpage. Richardson (2006) stated that wikispace is cooperative web space where students and people in general can create their own or group workspace and administer it from anywhere. Mandal (2009) stated that the fact of working in groups becomes a meaningful task since students share with each other and use technology as a means.

Other study is called “Writing Using Blogs: A Way to Engage Colombian Adolescents in Meaningful Communication” (Rojas, 2011). This study took place with ninth grade students of a public school in Bogotá, Colombia making use of online tools. It is very interesting to have this type of research in public schools and give a very good use to the computing lab and relating this part of the school with tools that help the SLA. The study implemented blogs, which has different advantages depending on the purpose. The study reported that using this type of tools encourages students to write more or improve their writing skills.

Another very interesting study from Universidad De La Sabana is called “The use of Skype Chat for Improving Writing Skills in an A2 Adult Learners Group” (Beltrán, 2009). The study makes use of Skype Text Chat as a tool to enhance writing skills. The theoretical basis of the study is ~~the~~ Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL), which is highly related to constructivism and cooperative learning. According to Good (2007), writing can be used as mediation or tool and be

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applied making use of different software, online tools, and technology. The use of software eases the process of checking, editing, reviewing, and producing a document in real-time with a classmate or asynchronously. This means that these tools can be exploited to have a better classroom and writing production experience. The study shows that during the process, learners were motivated and engaged to take part in the different tasks. Older students, on the other hand, were not as engaged as the young ones. In spite of this, results show that improvement was made in the writing production of older students as well as in their engagement in learning English as a foreign language.

Other study is called “The improvement of writing based on a genre approach through the use of an e-learning platform” (Durán, 2013). The study talks about how it is widely agreed by different researchers that in order to correctly learn a foreign language, there should be a balanced importance on the four skills, above all the writing skill which is usually left behind or not paid much attention to, it requires of highly cognitive skills and critical thinking (Vygotsky, 1978; Flower & Hayes, 1980). This is why especial attention should be placed on it. In order to solve this problem, the researcher integrated the Genre approach and e-learning platform for the daily teaching of tasks, which required writing, and at the same time improving it. The study which took place in the University of Veracruz shows how the use of genre approach and the use of e-learning platform along with e-peer checking and editing to improve the writing skills of students and at the same time make use of cooperative learning on self-error correction.

A very interesting study is that from Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia. The name of the study is “The Use of Genre Theory for Improving Writing Proficiency Skills in Explanations” (Martínez, 2014). This study centered its attention on the use of genre theory as an appropriate framework for English teaching as a second language. They compared 40 different writings from students before and after they had seen different frameworks of texts. Students improved their written production, ameliorating their

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literacy level through the study of texts, which follow the same genre. The study showed that the more the students were exposed to some specific type of texts, explanations, writing, and everything related to them, asking students to write texts using the same type of genre, showed improvement not only in the written production but on their commitment with the learning of English. In the study they took genre theory as a framework to examine texts, to see them as the final result of a social process, which has to do with context in which they are written due to the fact that there is an intrinsic connection between them. As Matthiessen (2006) stated

“Learning a language increasingly becomes a matter of learning through this language in a growing range of quotidian and professional contexts (thus moving closer to the condition of native speakers); and learning a language can increasingly be helped by learning about this language —not only passively by investigating it and by developing one’s own resources for learning.” (p. 33).

Another interesting study is called “Using genre theory for teaching writing at tertiary level: A practical example of teaching to write effective recounts” (Martínez, 2015). In this study, 115 written recounts were analyzed by the learners of the subject English Language III of the degree course in English studies. First of all, different types of texts or texts with different genre were explained to students, the results of this study shows that the use of the theory of genre that is via specific texts, in this case recounts, and its framework can help students to improve their writing production from the grammatical and textual viewpoint.

Another very interesting study is called “Mobile learning to improve writing in ESL teaching” (Robles, 2016). This took place in the city of Barranquilla, Colombia. This study reports on the results concerning the different type of texts and their characteristics produced by a student after using mobile technology as support in the improvement of writing. Its main objective is to show that mobile

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technology can be used as a tool in the development of writing. There was an analysis of the student's production during an eight-week course, and then was complemented with an interview done by the researcher. The results reveal that genre approach can be implemented with mobile technology to increase students' writing ability.

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### **Methodology**

This chapter discusses the methodology used in order to carry out the gathering of data for this research study which aims at finding out how the genre approach to writing and the use of online writing tools may help to improve students' writing skills in a level 3 class at Speak Language Center. First, the paradigm which this research is based on will be defined, the type of research and why, how it is going to be applied, a description of the setting, the instruments, and the complete description of the process.

Nowadays, research has become an important pillar of education due to the fact that one of its main purposes is to solve problems, be it in the classroom or in the community. As Babbie (1998) stated, research is a methodical, logically organized way to gather information, explain, observe and manage a phenomenon. This means that it is a process that is divided by stages. Each stage should be properly completed so that coherence can be maintained.

In the educational field, the scientific method in research is relatively new. It has become the tool by which the observation of problems of a setting can be identified. The fact of gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data has merged the scientific method within classroom. This does not necessarily mean that it is a piece of research. According to Gall, Borg and Gall, (1996), the core of a research study is the thought beyond the issues, how the researcher wants to solve them, how to build the different concepts and references that support the researcher's position.

Research can be classified in different categories depending on its purpose, according to Patton (1990): basic research, applied research, evaluation research and action research.

### **Research Approach**

Different authors differ when talking about approaches to "good" research (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Johannessen, 1992). There are six different potential approaches to research which are named:



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- Logical theoretical research.
- Quantitative research.
- Qualitative research.
- Participatory research.
- Action research
- Critical research

The different approaches can be mixed on a piece of research; this is called pragmatic approach.

However this is not common. In the next paragraph the different approaches will be defined.

### **Logical research**

This method of research is appropriate for basic sciences as different mathematicians state it.

The main concern is the modeling, study and practice of real world projects, which means the contextualization can be a difficult task. According to Hirschheim, Klein, and Lyytinen (1995)

data modeling is first and foremost a social and organizational activity and very little, if anything (except consulting folklore) is known how data modeling is exercised in practice and what its impacts are on organizations, their information systems management, and business operations. p. 195

This means the modeling of data is a logical activity just like the approach states.

### **Quantitative research**

A quantitative approach to research goes along with the typical scientific method of the so called “hard” sciences. When mentioning scientific method usually the words hypotheses, quantitative experiments, and measurable data arise. For this type of research, it is necessary to have understanding of the subject and gain statistical repeated or controllable results so that the solution can be highlighted

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as possible as stated. Different researchers, such as Guba and Lincoln (1994), state that this type of research is limited when using it with social topics or issues.

### **Qualitative research**

Qualitative research usually refers to situations that are based upon qualitative data (as opposed to quantitative). It does not allow manipulating active data or statistical data, which are under investigation. Strauss and Corbin (1994) stated that by having close interaction with the context or research field for an amount of time, the researcher grows a very deep understanding and usually becomes able to explain hypothetically the different theories around an issue.

### **Participatory research**

According to Reason (1994), Participatory Research refers to a group of approaches of research on social aspects or systems where the researcher engages actively in the process under research. This approach is very useful and interesting in order to validate results, but at the same time it is questioned by other traditional researchers such as Walsham (1995), who states that there are problems of being or having a personal relation with the objects of study and reporting one's own perception; this could harm the objectivity of the research.

### **Action Research**

The Action Research approach cannot be defined without affecting different aspects in the pedagogical and research area, since it is a symbol of different aspects which affect the classroom environment such as personal, professional and social change. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) stated that action research provides a path to follow where research becomes reflective, which at the same time eases the solution of problems. According to McNiff and Whitehead (2010), environmental forces such as the socio-cultural context, students' background, are considered moving forces, which are much better understood if they are experienced.

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Action research is a process where individuals analyze themselves along with their educational practice by making use of research techniques. According to Watts (1985), action research has 4 different assumptions, which are:

- Teachers and principals have a much better work when they have identified the issues by themselves.
- Teachers and principals develop into a more effective professionals and researchers when encouraged to assess and exam the results of their own work throughout the examination of their students.
- A more familiar ambience is created or enhanced thanks to the collaborative working.

### **Chosen Method**

For this research study, an Action Research method has been chosen. Action Research has the task of encouraging immediate changes in the setting, in this case the classroom. As Lewin (1948) stated, it has the capability to make changes faster due to the fact that research is done by teachers in their own settings.

Its major goal is to discover ways to ease and improve the education for the good. Researchers state that teachers have a professional responsibility, which is reflected in their classes. It is based on a framework that includes watching the issues of our own setting, and see how they can be enhanced.

### **The Action Research Cycle**

As Birley and Moreland (1998) state the main objective of this type of research is to bring forward an improvement in its own practice. Because it is focused on the practice, in this case the object of study who are learners, the study is developed through incremental changes and reiteration, and moreover it is an important element of any researcher due to the fact that it encourages awareness

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of the practice as Selepe (2001) stated. The cycle of Action Research consists of 4 steps, which are: planning, where a diagnosis is given; acting, where the intervention takes place; observing, where observation of the process is done, and reflecting where the results are evaluated and checked whether it worked or not and repeating the cycle again. This cycle is usually represented in a spiral form.



*Figure 4. Action Research Cycle (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2010)*

### Data Collection Instruments

In this paragraph different definitions are shown as well as the preface to the data collection instruments or techniques, which are used in this research study. These are tools that researchers use to obtain data from a specific object. There is a wide range of data collection instruments some of the most common are: journals, diaries, observation, questionnaire, and interview. Research approaches are usually linked to the techniques of data collection, what is going to be measured and results. researchers define data in research as the gathering of facts for further investigation. Other researchers, such as Aina (2004), define data as raw unspoiled fact so that when this data is converted, it can be used as information.

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Data collection instruments permit the researcher to gather data or facts methodically and systematically about the object of study. Olatoye (2011), and Gay, Geoffrey and Peter (2009) point out that data gathering is an essential part in the research process in education and any science.

The chosen instruments for this Action Research are: students' composition, survey for students, and a teacher's journal.

**Students' production.** The Students' production can have different formats; these are semi-structured tasks with guidelines which are required for a specific topic at a certain level. Different authors, Loevinger (1976), Mines (1981), and Rest (1976), state that there is an important advantage and that is that the main utility in students' production is to check their progress in the research. The students' production will be taken into account in order to watch their improvement from the beginning of the research to the end, the students' use of the specific features of the genre will be considered, the main objective is to check whether learners have enhanced their writing skills through the use of online engaging tools using genre that is common to their daily work.

**Survey for students.** The main goal of a survey is to give information, summaries, specific characteristics, beliefs, attitudes, opinions or behavior pattern of a specific community regarding a topic. A survey is basically a research technique that gathers information from a specific group of people. They can be customized or standardized. Light, Singer, and Willett (1990) have argued that, "if used wisely, it can lead to improvements throughout the entire fabric of an institution" (p. 234). There are different ways to collect data from surveys for example: in person, via phone, via e-mail questionnaire, and interviews. According to Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle (2006), surveys are one of the most commonly used technique in the social sciences research with the appearance of this type of instrument in around 70% of the surveys.

Surveys take place in response to the particular situation or issue that is being object of study or

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to identify patterns of low performance as stated by Mellard, Patterson, and Prewett (2007) where they managed to apply surveys in order to find the patterns in students' readings and encourage them taking into account the acquired information.

Each question within the survey had a purpose, **the first question:** "Do you consider adequate the way how the teacher prepared each lesson?" The first question aimed at finding out students' perception of the usefulness of the methodology to improve their writing skills.

**Second question:** "Are you satisfied with the form of teaching by the professor?: presentation and work with materials, form of evaluating, form of organizing the individual, pair and group work, the way of motivating students?" This second question was similar to the first one but it had the difference that allowed students to be more specific when referring to the things that he/she did not like.

**Third question:** "Do you feel that you have improved your Writing?" this question is very transparent, it is personal.

**Fourth question:** "Do you think that the classes are linked to your needs as a professional?". this question is also relevant since learners have different professions it was necessary to find topics that are common for everybody.

**Fifth question:** "Did you like the material that was you received? (e-mails, blogs) what would you improve?". This question is important as well because here we can see the different suggestions of the students.

**Sixth question:** "Do you think that analyzing a model of e-mail facilitated you the writing of your own e-mail?". This question was closely related to the use of Genre-based approach in the improvement of writing skills and through this question we could see whether they felt that they have improved or not.

**Seventh question:** "Do you consider that the process of writing along with your teacher eased the writing of your own e-mail?". This question's purpose is to see whether the Genre-based approach and

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Callaghan's Wheel model of teaching cycle worked or not. Because according to the cycle the last stage is the independent construction of a text.

**The eighth question:** "Do you think that the fact of following a model of a text depending of its genre has helped you in ameliorating the writing and composition in English?". this question is very important because it is related to Genre-based Approach in the improvement of writing skills and whether students feel if they have had a progress or not.

**The ninth question:** "What difficulties did you have during the writing process?". The purpose of this question is to know the different difficulties which students had while developing the writing process, this can help ameliorating the teaching process.

**The tenth question:** "What advantages or benefits were you able to perceive with the form how they were taught?". This question was subjective due to the fact that each student could give his/her point of view regarding the English class and its benefits.

In this study surveys were used at the beginning to know learners' preferences in order to wisely choose the topics and the tools for the classes, it was ~~be~~ applied to professionals such as 3 engineers, 1 microbiologist and an accountant. Another survey was applied at the end of the research was carried out, the purpose of the survey was to see if the students themselves felt any change in the level of ability in the writing skill whether they had or not perceived their improvement. the tool used was SurveyMonkey which is an online service for doing surveys.

**A teacher's journal.** A teacher's journal or diary is one of the options which is chosen in order to analyze the praxis and setting of a group, the journal gives realistic information and reflection about the context. Maňák and Švec (2005) stated that a teacher's journal is a personal instrument where objective and subjective data is gathered. In spite of this, it is very important due to the fact that it is the collection of the different experiences of the teacher on field; the teacher takes into account the most

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important events which can have an impact on the solution of the problem. Taghilou (2007) considers Teacher Journal as one of the simplest and easiest way of targeted thoughts or reflection on a student, group, situation, etc. This means that it is very common to see the use of teacher's journal in different educational research around the world and not only on SLA. In this study, the teacher's journal was used as a diary and contained different type of information, such as context, when something out of the ordinary happens. It was used with every lesson and filled out anecdotally, without closed questions. The information that you can find in Teacher Journal has to do with a description of the context of the class, how students felt, and whether something out of the ordinary had happened or interrupted the class.

### **Triangulation**

The three instruments, students' production, surveys and teacher's journal will complement between themselves in order to validate the study by comparing each data gathered per lesson, how students have improved, the vision of the teacher on students' improvement through the journal, and most importantly, the vision of learners on their own writing skills ' development through the survey.

### **Description of the intervention**

This intervention has been of high importance to the language center because it is the first time a problem has been found and deeply worked in. This intervention proposal totally changes the paradigm that was established at the language center which is communicative-based but having as a priority oral interaction. As a matter of fact, the different groups of teachers have agreed on the same issue and even some learners realized of this by the end of the different English courses. For the design of the Pedagogical sequences, different aspects had to be taken into account, such as their sociocultural context, and more specifically their current occupations. This is highly important because the group that was chosen to participate in this project is made up by learners who are professionals in different



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areas, such as: engineering, accounting, and biology. This means that the pedagogical sequences must have a varied type of genre and topics, which are of common use. Another interesting characteristic is that of culture. The language center is located in Barranquilla, Colombia, at the Colombian north coast, where the cultural behavior plays an important role in every aspect of the design of the pedagogical sequence.

The intervention proposal was organized in a series of four pedagogical sequences, each with a specific objective related to the genres selected for this specific group, as well as the online engaging tools chosen. The genres chosen for the intervention were e-mail and blog entry. Below is a discussion on the characteristics of each of them.

### **What is an E-mail?**

E-mail (electronic mail) is the exchange of computer-based or storage-based information or message by telecommunication. E-mail was and still is the most widespread way to communicate from final users to companies.

For this study, first, students will be familiarized with an informal e-mail, how it is constructed and this will be done through the use of edited images. Then, a more formal and generalized e-mail will be introduced, by following certain guidelines:

- Use a neutral email address, not a nickname or username, this means that a normal email address is more accepted for a formal email
- Keep the subject header short and accurate, the part where you can find the subject of the email, why it is important, why it has been sent, it should be short but clear.
- Write a proper salutation, and introduce yourself, if necessary, a proper salutation in a formal email makes it more interesting to read.

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- Write your message. Keep it to the point, this means that you should be coherent with the subject sign off appropriately.
- Proofread the email before sending. This last step is very important because any correction can be done before sending the formal email.

In order to write the e-mail, students will follow the wheel model (Callaghan & Rothery, 1988), so they will first deconstruct a model, analyzing information about the context and field, its structure and the language used; then, they will co-construct an e-mail together with the teacher; and finally, they will write their own e-mails.

### **What is a blog?**

According to Blood (2000), a blog is a truncation of the expression **Weblog**. It is a website where discussion forums are held, where daily situations, problems, logs, are held. On the different websites, blogs are usually placed in reversed-chronological order which means that the last created or modified blog entry appears first.

The rise of blogs in the late stages of the XX century is closely related to that of web-publishing tools which ease the creation of websites, along with tools that facilitated the posting of different types of information on the web, technologies such as HTML, FTP among others. According to (Mutum, Dilip; Wang, Qing, 2010) in the early XXI century most of the websites use Web 2.0 which emphasizes on interactive tools or software that allow users to create forums or post comments without having an advanced knowledge in computing or programming. The blog entry writing will also follow the ‘wheel’ model described above, for genre-approach.

### **Description of the pedagogical sequences**

Each pedagogical sequence can be extended up to 3 to 4 classes due to the fact that the language center has established that a session lasts 2 hours divided into two parts each of 60 minutes.

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This means that the time-lapse of the different tasks depended also on this as well as on the type of exercise and difficulty. The Pedagogical sequences follow the “wheel” model (Callaghan & Rothery, 1988) which is one of the most popular models when it comes to teaching writing using genre.

*The first pedagogical sequence*, as previously stated, is related to an online tool, which is very common nowadays, the e-mail, which at the same time constitutes a specific writing genre. The main objective is to be able to send a request type of e-mail. At first, the teacher gives the learners different cutouts with parts of an e-mail, so that they have to work cooperatively in order to organize it. It is recommended to do it in pairs and one group of three because the group has only 5 students. Then, just like in the model by Callaghan and Rothery (1998), the teacher shows a model of an e-mail, describing a context so that the activity has relevance: first, the teacher will show a set of questions for students to discuss the context of the email (what an e-mail is, how it is used nowadays and why it is so important). Learners will discuss and share answers. The teacher then divides the students in groups giving each a different e-mail. Students read and analyze the e-mails individually and then talk to their partner next to him or her about any problem described in it. The teacher gives away the cut-outs again, now students have to categorize the different cut-outs in informal and formal state, then while having the text on the screen the questions are displayed. This would be the preparation for the joint construction, the teacher splits the group into two customers and manager, each group has to write an e-mail, all this process has an estimated duration of 25 minutes.

The next step in the first pedagogical sequence is the joint construction where the teacher gives a task; students have to cooperatively work in order to achieve the goal of this stage. This phase has a duration of 20 minutes and a device which can run a text processor is used. And last the independent construction of a text. The teacher then gives feedback using either the institutional e-mail or Google docs.

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*The second pedagogical sequence* is based on the unit 3C of the course book, using the same genre, which is e-mail, but the main objective in this pedagogical sequence is to write a reply to a request. This is closely related to the first pedagogical sequence, which adds coherence to the intervention. First, as a warm-up, the teacher shows different e-mails randomly, students in groups have to categorize the e-mails and say whether they are informal or formal, learners share their thoughts regarding the different situations presented in the e-mails especially whether they require to use an informal or formal register and why. The next step, just like in the teaching cycle (Callaghan & Rothery, 1988), the teacher gives learners a context, he posts four different pictures of clothes, and assigns cloth to a group, and then the teacher states the issue. Now, learners should watch and analyze the picture assigned. Learners ask the sales clerk where the cloth is and here is where the issue begins. In the text there is a complaint about a specific topic, this is the context, it can be used as a model so that learners can follow the model, the different characteristics of the genre are explained by the teacher, learners have to be very attentive due to the fact that this genre has different ways to be used, this phase has a duration of 20 minutes. Then in the joint negotiation of text, the teacher provides a text using the same genre but with different situations, learners are divided into groups of salesclerks and customers which are related to the context, students have to send an e-mail complaining about an issue, they have to do this by following the model using the genre e-mail, this phase of the Pedagogical sequence has a duration of 25 minutes. As independent construction, the teacher provides two situations, very similar to the previous ones, here students have to write about how they complain with some topics but they have to do it by following the model of the genre.

*The third pedagogical sequence.* In this sequence the type of genre which is used is totally different from that of the previous Pedagogical sequences, this genre is known as Blog, the main objective of the third Pedagogical sequence is to post or upload a blog entry. Given the fact that there

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are different professionals in the group, only one type of genre would make the classes less playful and less interesting for the learners. In the first part, which lasts 15 minutes a warm-up is done, different examples of blogs are shown and explanations of what a blog is. Learners describe each blog and say whether they find it interesting or not and why.

Each Pedagogical sequence follows the teaching cycle, which has been previously stated, after the warm-up comes the modeling phase, teacher provides an example of a blog and points out its different parts and characteristics this process takes 20 minutes. Later, for the joint negotiation, the teacher provides same situations and genre; learners have to write the first scheme of a blog. The main point is to include all the characteristics that a blog should have. This is done in groups of 2 and takes 25 minutes. The independent construction phase is very interesting because learners begin to write more freely but following a model with the genre. Learners create a blog entry about their last vacations. They can use multimedia, pictures, etc. This activity takes of 30 minutes but it can take longer.

*The fourth pedagogical sequence* makes use of the same genre but it gives a different use to it. The aim of the pedagogical sequence is to correctly express opinions and critics using blogs. This is highly interesting due to the fact that this genre follows a specific model with some characteristics that makes it more playful and interesting to work with. As a warm-up, the teacher shows a chart with some predefined questions about restaurants and types of food, learners have to answer to the questions.

The genre has already been stated which is a blog entry; the difference is that in this case a context is set as background. The teacher divides the class so that learners can work cooperatively and perform the task, this stage lasts 20 minutes. In the joint negotiation phase, the context is already established as well, the teacher provides learners with items that can be used to facilitate the performance, always taking into account the model of the teaching cycle. Following the ‘wheel’ model

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(Callaghan & Rothery, 1988) comes the independent construction phase. Learners must create a blog entry giving opinions. Once this is done, a forum is opened where they can express their opinions. This task can be done with different tools, there are a wide variety of tools on the web to create a blog, but in this case in order to facilitate the creation and to optimize the time, the service of Google Docs is used with the only difference that learners should follow the model of this genre. This last task takes of around 30 minutes but it can take much longer.

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### **Results**

This section describes the most important results of the research study, obtained through the use of instruments such as students' production, teacher's journal and online surveys.

The students' production is very important due to the fact that it is where the main evidences and proofs are located and with which the teacher can say whether they have improved or not. It is important to observe how the methodology of the language center actually reduces the improvement of writing skills by not prioritizing on writing tasks and finally, a teacher's journal with some writings about characteristics of the classes, things that happened or just regular observations while the teacher applied the Pedagogical sequences.

The group began with a specific English level orally, listening, and speaking, in the first and second Pedagogical sequence are coincidences with the genre used because as it has been previously stated in this research, there are different occupations in the group and choosing only one genre especially for one occupation would not be the best choice, this was the main reason why the genre e-mail was selected due to the fact that it is a tool widely spread and very popular. There was a coincidence with the same genre in the L1, this is the main reason why the first and second pedagogical sequences were not difficult to get into practice. Using the teaching cycle and given the fact that this genre follows some steps which are very similar as in the L1.

Something very important to highlight is that when learners have the instructions or the steps of how to write a text, the task becomes much easier to do. This aspect plays an important role given the fact that in the learners' sociocultural context and background a guide is usually needed; this can be seen since the beginning of the academic life of a student.

The pedagogical sequence worked because it is possible to see the how learners have improved from the data gathered to the first evidence that learners have had during the implementation of the

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study, through the use of online engaging tools, these tools which are related to their daily life and work. As stated in the students' production, it is possible to see how they follow a model or guidelines taking into account the teaching cycle proposed by the teacher, although there were learners who were not satisfied with the use of the genre Blog even though they managed to carry out the different tasks, these descriptions from how the classes took place, how they developed during the study can also be seen in the journal where is stated how learners felt, how some pedagogical sequences took more than it was foreseen, this might have affected somehow the teaching process because as it has been previously stated, in the language center the groups follow a pace line, this means that at a specific date the group should be in a certain unit.

### **Analysis of Students' Production**

In the pedagogical sequences the same genre is used just like the previous one, the difference is that the main aim of the pedagogical sequence is to write critics and/or opinions about a situation in a restaurant; it can be either real or unreal, the collaborative work was very good because the students shared not only in the writing aspect but between themselves allowing them to get to know each other even more, this is interesting and important at the same time because the confidence and trust in their classmates increases and the fear or shame of doing any mistake in class decreases. A downside of this type of activity is that in order not to have any legal issues is much better to tell the students not to use any registered trademark unless there is a granted permission. These are legal aspects from the language center which have to be taken into account.

**Pedagogical sequence 1:** Here we can see the difference between how learners produce a text with a text-processor, these tools also helps them to write the words correctly although sometimes students may not realize of this.

**Pedagogical sequence 3:** This pedagogical sequence apparently was going to take more than



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two sessions but learners have gotten used to write on a word processor, besides the fact that they do more writing improves this skill, they distinguish much better how to use the narrative tenses as we can see in the following evidences of blogs examples, students followed a common template and by following this genre they wrote about their last vacation. The downside is that not all learners agreed on showing their work online due to the ridiculization or just shame.

**Pedagogical sequence 4:** This pedagogical sequence follows the same genre just like the previous one, the difference is that the main aim of this pedagogical sequence is to write critics and/or opinions about a situation in a restaurant; it can be either real or unreal, the collaborative work was very good because the students shared not only in the writing aspect but between themselves allowing them to get to know each other even more, this is interesting and important at the same time because the confidence and trust in their classmates increases and the fear or shame of doing any mistake in class decreases. A downside of this type of activities is that in order not to have any legal issues it is much better to tell the students not to use any registered trademark unless there is a granted permission. These are legal aspects from the language center which have to be taken into account.

In the evidence we can see how the engineer goes straight to the point when writing a complain, he writes in a similar way as if he were at his job, this points out the fact that learners such as engineers require of more writing production.

As a conclusion we can say that the pedagogical sequence works but the selection of genre can be improved, although blogs were chosen since not all students have the same profession and blogs are possible to be created with different purposes following a guideline.

### **Analysis of Teacher's Journal**

As for the teacher's journal we can see how there were some minor differences between the planning of the pedagogical sequences and the classes, as it has been stated in the journal, the fact that

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groups change their schedule weekly affects the pedagogical process since not all learners are available every day, they have to get to an agreement before choosing a schedule, having a small group has its advantages and that is that teacher can check upon all of the students but its downside is that there is a paceline. We can say that time is very important in the language center. Another highly important aspect is that learners use different online tools at their workplace such as email but they were not used to use e-mail clients, and as it is stated in the Teacher's Journal the explanation of how to use it took more time.

Something that has to be taken into account is the fact that teachers rotate, I was not the only teacher assigned to the group of Denver, in spite of this the pedagogical sequence had a continuous progression.

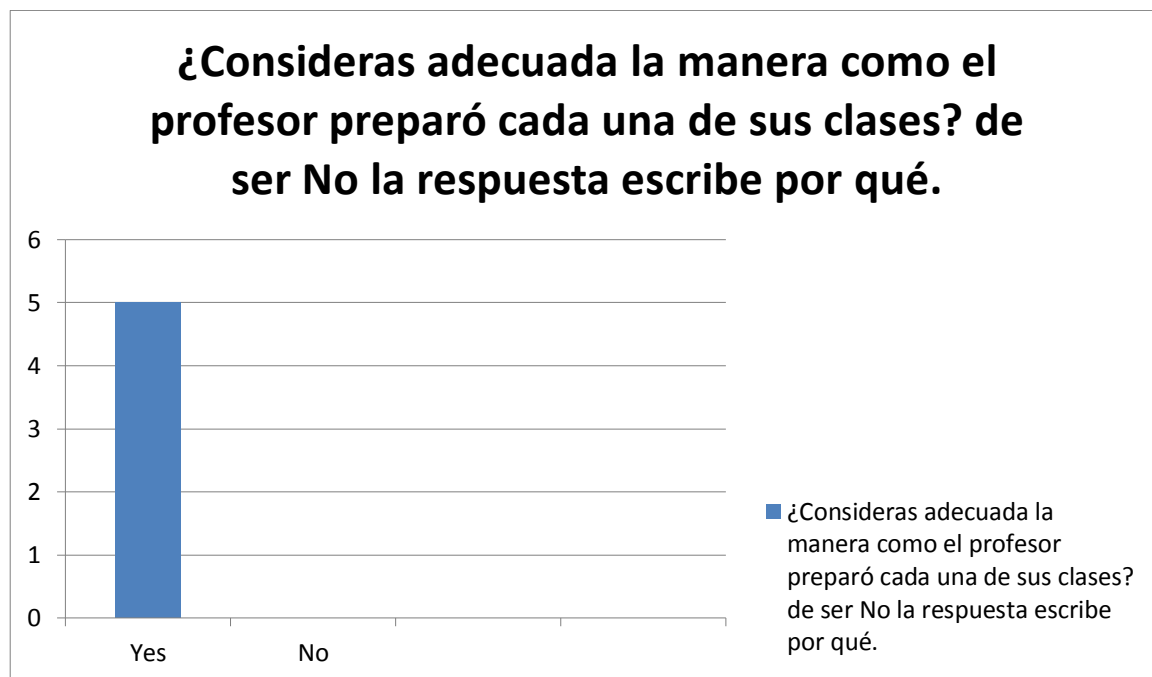
Students had a positive change when referring to their writing skills and text composition, this can be seen in the progress they had, this is evident in learners' organization of ideas when writing, especially in writings that are not related to their field such as in the examples of the writing of their last vacation in a blog, this is observable since they have to follow a model different from those which they are used to, when writing about their last vacation they managed to follow the model and besides made correct use of the simple past as they wrote their story in detail.

### **Analysis of Students' Survey**

In the following paragraphs the survey is analyzed, question per question, here it is possible to watch how learners have answered to the intervention by the researcher, how they have liked or disliked the different techniques, the methodology used to teach, the different materials which were used in classes and whether they had to do with their daily needs.

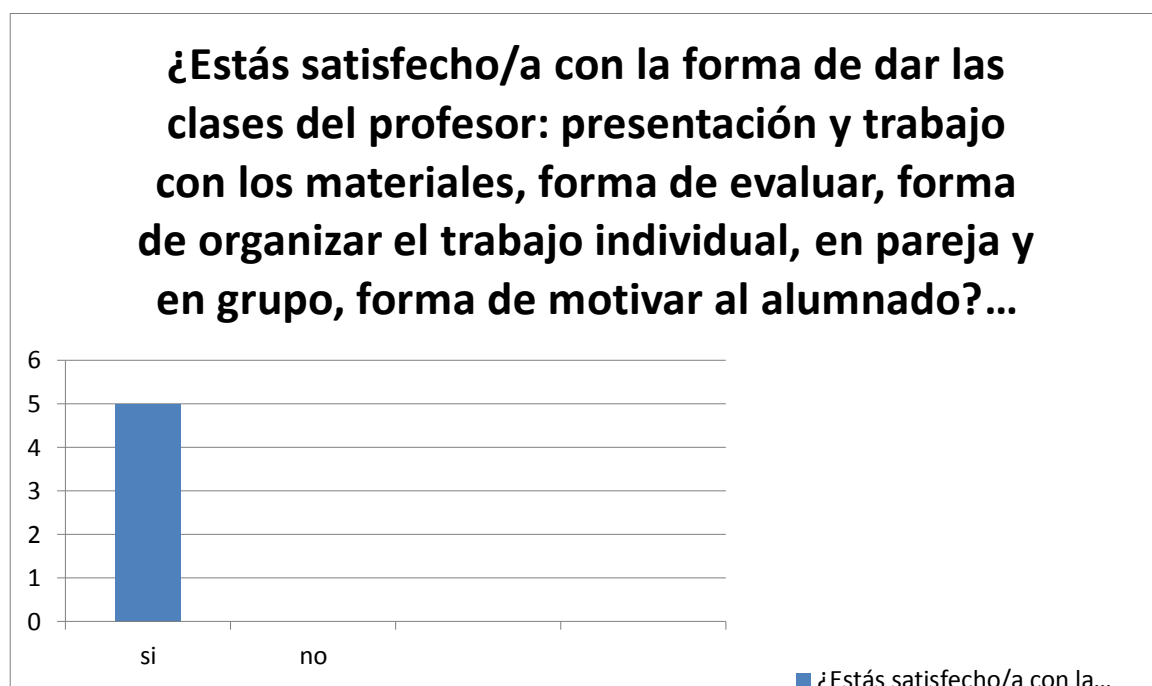
As for the first question, which was whether learners liked or not considered the way how the teacher prepared each one of his classes, all of the learners answered yes.

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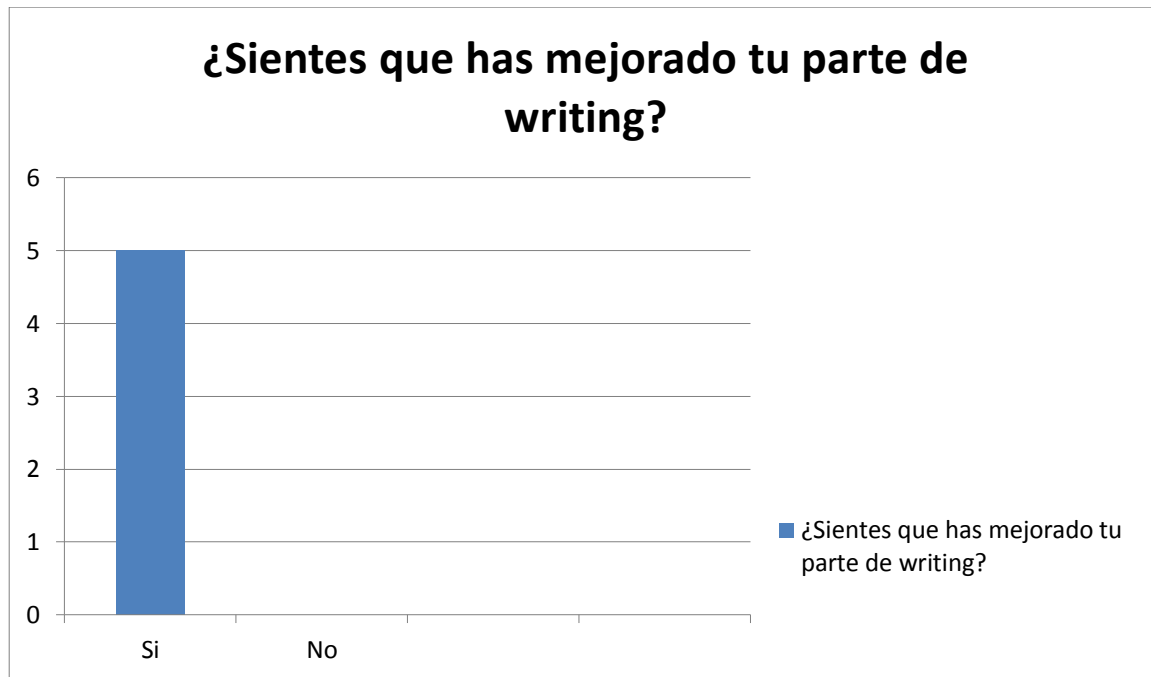
Here we can see that all of the learners agreed on how the teacher prepared all of the classes.

Next question was if learners were satisfied with how teacher taught, the materials used, all of the students agreed on this too.



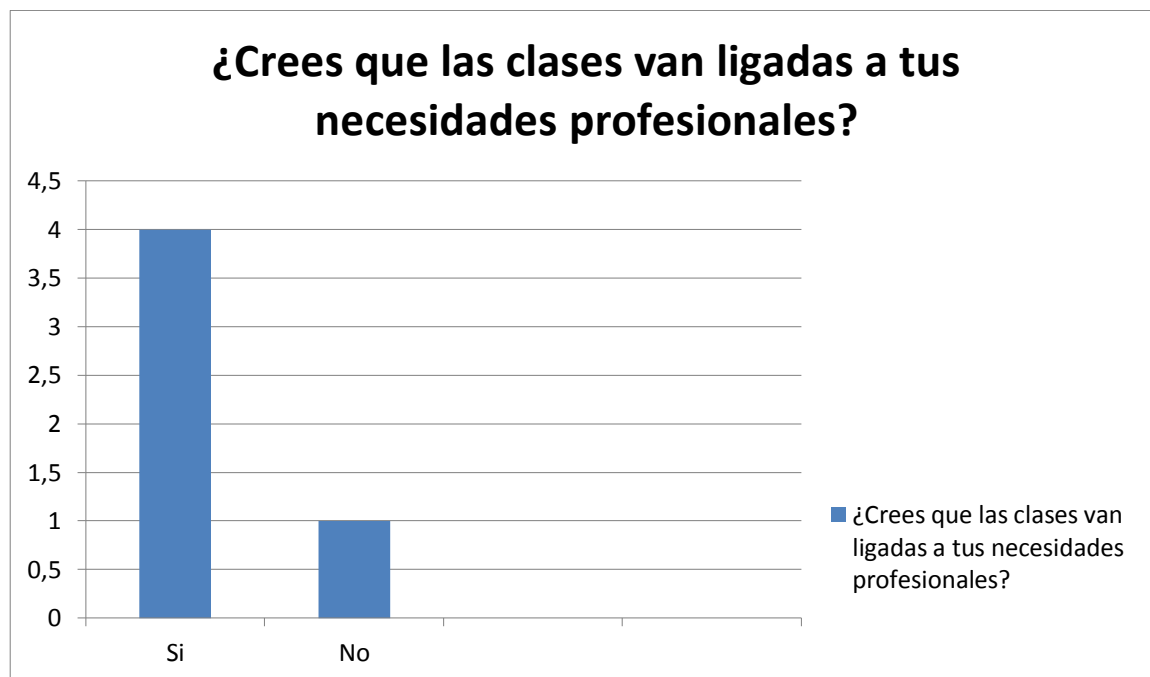
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Next question is more specific, it has to do with the skill that learners have been working on since the beginning of this research, all learners have the sensation that they have improved, and we can also see this using the evidences.



In the next question the teacher asked whether learners felt that classes go with their professional needs.

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Following question is directly related to the materials some of the students agreed that it was very fun; as we can see in the following citations:

“Me gustó mucho, me pareció muy divertido” (I liked it a lot, I found it very fun)

But some others thought that it would have been better using another type of genre different from blog, just like we see in the following answers:

“Me encantó, estuvo bien.” (I loved it, it was fine)

“Me gustó y en cuanto a los blogs me gustó también pero me hubiese gustado mucho más hacer reports.” (I liked it but I would have loved even more to write reports)

“Me gustó mucho, le agregaría temas más que tengan que ver con negocios pero obviamente no todos en el salón somos de negocios, así que todo bien.” (I liked it a lot, I would add topics that have to do with businesses but not everybody in the classroom is related to business so it is ok.)

“En cuanto a los blogs le agregaría temas que tengan que ver con mi área, claro que siempre y cuando todos sean de mi profesión, pero estuvo bien.” (As for blogs I would add topics related to my field, of

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course as long as all my classmates have the same occupation as me)

Now, next question is related to the materials used in classes which encouraged students in the writing activities.

**¿Crees que analizar un modelo de email te facilitó la escritura de tu propio email?**

“Claro, porque sigue una línea.” (Of course, because I follow a guideline)

“Por supuesto, porque me guiaba de un modelo.” (Absolutely, because I followed a model)

“Sí, me facilitó la redacción de mis emails.” (yes, it facilitated the writing of my emails)

“Sí y mucho, sobretodo al momento de terminarlo” (Yes and a lot, above all at the momento of ending it)

“Sí, porque hay que seguir una línea en la empresa.” (Yes, because in the company we have to follow some guidelines as well.)

From these answers we can conclude that students really liked the use of a genre and especially to follow a model, this means that the use of the “Wheel model” in the teaching cycle really made a very important part of the teaching process.

Next question is about how they felt having the aid of the teacher while writing, whether it really worked or not.

**¿Consideras que el proceso de escribir conjuntamente con tu profesor te hizo más fácil escribir luego tu propio email?**

“claro que sí, porque podía seguir los pasos y lo que debe llevar un email formal.” (Of course, because I was able to follow the steps and what an email should have)

“sí, porque me brindó todo lo que necesitaba así como también trabajar conjuntamente con los compañeros.” (Yes, because it gave me everything that I needed and also working together with my classmates)

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“Si, porque le da más confianza a uno.” (Yes, because it gives more confidence to oneself)

“claro que si, me dió más confianza al hacer mi propio email. (Of course, it gave me more confidence the fact of writing my own email)

“desde luego, me dió más confianza al redactar.” (Absolutely, writing my own email gave me more confidence)

After reading these answers we can conclude that having the help of the teacher helps learners and moreover it increases the learners their confidence which can affect positively their learning experience.

Next question is closely related to the use of a genre in the improvement the writing skills.

**¿Crees que el hecho de seguir un modelo de texto dependiendo del género te ha ayudado en mejorar tu redacción en Inglés?**

“claro que si, porque así es como aprende uno observando y luego haciendo, es una manera parecida.”  
(Yes, because that’s how one learns, watching then doing, it is very similar to that way)

“si, porque hace las veces de un bosquejo.” (Yes, because it is like a sketch)

“claro, porque en la empresa al momento de redactar un reporte uno se guía por un modelo.” (Of course, because in the company when writing a report we have to follow a model)

“ayuda, pero es como si no te diera más libertad cuando escribes.” (it helps, but it is as it wouldn’t give you more freedom when writing)

“Un poco, aunque preferiría también un poco más de informalidad.” (a little, although I would prefer a little bit more of informality)

From these answers we can conclude that most of the students agreed on the fact of using a model depending on the genre helps them improve their skills, this is due to the fact that in their work they have to follow models to fill out forms, emails, reports, logs, etcetera.

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And last question of this survey is related to how learners liked or disliked the methodology used in classes and why.

### **¿Qué ventajas o beneficios pudiste percibir con la forma en la que se dieron las clases?**

“El profesor es muy divertido, y también nos da confianza, personalmente sentí más ánimo para participar que antes.” (The teacher is very funny and he also makes us feel more confident, personally I felt much more eager to participate than before)

“Eran muy divertidas a pesar de que utilizamos la parte de escribir mucho, a mi parecer es lo más tedioso de aprender un segundo idioma.” (They were very fun in spite of the fact that we used the writing a lot, I think that it is the most tiring part of learning a foreign language)

“El carisma que maneja el profesor te ayuda a disipar la pena. el beneficio es que uno participa más.” (The charisma that the teacher has helps dissipate the shame. The benefit is that you participate a lot more)

“mi confianza cuando hablo y escribo ha crecido mucho.” (My confidence when I talk and write has grown a lot)

“Al ser un grupo pequeño y como ya nos teníamos confianza fué mucho más fácil.” (The fact that it is a small group and as we already trust ourselves it made the process easier)

From these answers we can conclude that learners were satisfied with the methodology used in classes, some interesting answers were related to the fact that the 4 pedagogical sequences which took many lessons was tiring some of the learners. “Eran muy divertidas a pesar de que utilizamos la parte de escribir mucho”. Another important aspect is the fact that because of doing teamwork and using cooperative learning techniques learners felt less shy as we can see in this answer “mi confianza cuando hablo y escribo ha crecido mucho.”

As a conclusion, it is affirmative to say that using online engaging tools to enhance writing



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skills using techniques related to teaching writing using genre encourages and improves this aspect of their writing skill.

The ways that were used in order to have an improvement in the writing skills for students from the group of level III Denver showed progresses in the composition of a text by following a model, this is very useful due to the fact that students are professionals and make use of similar tools.

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### **Discussion**

The main objective of this research was to Improve students' writing skills through the use of the genre-based approach and online engaging tools, also to analyze how the application of a framework along with the use of online tools which have text and word processor affects the learning experience, also determine whether students' engagement and writing production is increased by using online tools.

The objective of analyzing the application of a framework along with the use of online writing tools actually enhances students' writing skills development and the use of online writing tools to enhance the students' writing skills development as it was mentioned in the Theoretical Framework when referring to genre in linguistics, Martin (1999) states that genre is basically an activity where two or more individuals participate with an orienting goal in order to express ideas, this can be seen when students follow a model, after the teacher presents the model which they should follow then according to Callaghan teaching cycle. According to the results the application of a framework for a genre-based approach can improve students' writing performance. They have reached a positive goal due to the fact that by having a model students have ameliorated the writing skills, this can be seen in the exercise of writing about your last vacation where students made use of the simple past in a correct way they liked the use of technology in the improvement of writing skills.

The aspects of students' writing that is enhanced by the use of the genre-approach and online engaging tools are those related not only to the writing skills but to different characteristics which go hand in hand with the skill previously mentioned, for example the improvement in the creation of a text taking into account the different steps or how the shape of the text is, besides the imagination is something very important which is also improved.

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This study paves the way to future research due to the fact that nowadays online tools are very important and are related to their daily lives as well as their work, and personally in my work as a teacher-researcher I will continue to see in what other ways online tools combined with different approaches or methodologies can ameliorate students' needs related to ESL.

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RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

**Appendix A: Pedagogical Sequences**

**1<sup>st</sup> Pedagogical sequence**

**IDENTIFICATION**

**Teacher:** Jesús Fernando García Castro

**Group:** Denver

**Unit:** 3

**Genre:** E-mail

**Lesson Aim:** By the end of this lesson, students should be able to write a request email, applying the aspects of the genre studied.

Stage	Sub stage	Procedure		Time	Materials
		What the teacher does	What the students do		
<b>Warm- up</b>		Give students cut-outs with parts of an email for them to put together in the right order.	Students work in pairs to put together the parts of the email. They also write the name of the part (greeting, body, farewell expressions, etc.)	10 minutes	Emails.
<b>Modeling</b>	Context	T shows a set of questions for students to discuss:	Ss discuss and share answers with the T.		

RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED  
APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is an email?</li> <li>- What do you use emails for?</li> </ul> <p>What is the purpose of an email?</p>			
	Text	The teacher divides the group, giving away the different e-mails to each.	The students will read the e-mail individually and then talk to a partner about the problem described in it.	10 minutes	Laptop, T.V.
		The teacher will show both e-mails on the main screen and will ask the students to watch.	Students should read and watch.	10 minutes	
	2nd:	Teacher will give away the different cut-outs again.	Ss in groups will categorize the different cut-outs in formal, informal and state why.		
	Text	The teacher displays the questions	The students read the different questions		

RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED  
APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

	preparation for joint construction of new text in the same genre	The teacher will split the group in two, group A is the customer and group B the manager	Each group will write an e-mail.		
<b>Joint negotiation of text</b>	Joint construction			20 minutes	
	A client wants to look for a specific design of a clothing brand, the customer decides to send an e-mail.				Laptop, E-mail supported device
<b>Independent construction of text</b>		T gives feedback on this google doc (how? Any conventions for feedback?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ss choose one of the situations left in the previous stage to work individually on their emails.</li> <li>- They write a draft of their email in a google doc.</li> <li>- St works on new version and send email to a partner.</li> </ul>		

**Warm-up**

RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED  
APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

1st image

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to bring to your attention some issues with my local train service.

I take the 8am train from Manchester to Liverpool every morning. This week, my train has arrived at least 10 minutes late each day, and I have been unable to find a seat due to overcrowding.

Passengers are becoming increasingly frustrated. I have seen several people complain to members of your staff that the delays are making them late for work, and the overcrowding means that many of us are forced to stand in the central aisle of the train for the duration of the journey. This is extremely uncomfortable.

I would like to suggest that you run a more regular service on the Manchester to Liverpool line. Another solution would be to add an extra carriage to trains at peak times in order to provide more space.

I hope you will address these concerns as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,

Paul Jones

2nd image

RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED  
APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

Dear John,

I hope you're well. Thanks for giving me some time to think about your business proposal.

First, let me just say that I think it would be a great idea to open a café on the high street. It definitely makes sense since there are no other cafés in the area.

Having said that, I'm afraid I'm going to have to turn your offer down. I've thought long and hard about this decision, and I just don't think it's the right time for me to get involved with a big project like this.

To be honest, I would struggle to find enough money to cover my share of the initial investment costs. Also, I don't really want to leave my current job, and I think it would be impossible for me to commit to the café project while I'm still working full-time.

Best of luck with the café. I'm sure you'll make a success of it without me!

Speak soon

Chris

**Modeling**

Questions:

- What's your favorite class? Are you learning anything interesting?
- Do you have a job? If so, what do you do?
- Are you studying for any exams? Do you study alone or with others?
- What job do you want someday? Are you doing anything to prepare for it?
- Why are you studying English? What do you hope to do in this class?

**Joint Construction**

**To**

**TEXT**

RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED  
APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

**TEXT**  
**TEXT**

**CLOSURE**

**NAME**

RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED  
APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Pedagogical sequence**

**IDENTIFICATION**

**Teacher:** Jesús Fernando García Castro

**Group:** Denver

**Unit:** 3C

**Genre:** E-mail

**Lesson Aim:** Write a reply to a request email.

Stage	Sub stage	Procedure		Time	Materials
		What the teacher does	What the students do		
<b>Warm-up</b>		T will show different emails randomly	Ss in groups will categorize the emails in request, reply and say if they are formal or informal.		
	2nd		Ss will share their thoughts on the different situations whether they require a formal or informal register and why.		
<b>Modeling</b>	Context:  The context is in a	first: The teacher will post four different	First: learners will watch the picture	20 minutes	laptop, display



RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED  
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	department store, the students are divided. salesclerk and customers. The customers search online for the location of special sales with no luck, so they decided to send an e-mail to the proprietaries.	pictures of clothes. assign a cloth to a group. Second: The teacher will signal the problem.	assigned. They will ask to the sales clerk where the cloth is. Second: The sales clerk will not be able to answer correctly.		
	Text: an email about a complaint will be shown so that learners follow the same structure in the genre of e-mail when complaining.	The teacher will show an example of an e-mail sent by an angry customer. The teacher will signal the characteristic s of the genre.	Learners will be very attentive to how the the genre can be used in different forms.	20 minutes	Example of the genre, laptop
<b>Joint negotiation of text</b>	preparation for joint construction of new text in the same genre	The teacher will post a different situations. Learners will be divided by groups of salesclerk and	Learners will send an email to the department store complaining about how difficult it is to find a	25 minutes	word processor capable device

RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED  
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		customers.	cloth. and the representants of sales clerks will reply		
<b>Independent construction of text</b>		The teacher will provide two different situations. - A person pays attention to what people say - counselors will reply	Learners will write about how they complain when people talk about them. The others will be counselors and they will also reply	25 minutes	word processor capable device

**Warm-up**



RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.



### **Modeling - Context**

These are the objects

RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED  
APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.



which  
they are looking for.

**Model**

Customer Service Manager  
That Awful Company  
Somewhere Awful  
UR BAD  
June 15, 2016

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing today to complain of the poor service I received from your company on June 12, 2016. I was visited by a representative of That Awful Company, Mr. Madman, at my home on that day. Mr. Madman was one hour late for his appointment and offered nothing by way of apology when he arrived at noon. Your representative did not remove his muddy shoes upon entering my house, and consequently left a trail of dirt in the hallway. Mr. Madman then proceeded to present a range of products to me that I had specifically told his assistant by telephone I was not interested in. I repeatedly tried to ask your representative about the products that were of interest to me, but he refused to deal with my questions. We ended our meeting after 25 minutes without either of us having accomplished anything.

I am most annoyed that I wasted a morning (and half a day's vacation) waiting for Mr. Madman to show up. My impression of That Awful Company has been tarnished, and I am now concerned about how my existing business is being managed by your firm. Furthermore, Mr. Madman's inability to remove his muddy shoes has meant that I have had to engage the services, and incur the expense, of a professional carpet cleaner.

I trust this is not the way That Awful Company wishes to conduct business with valued customers—I have been with you since the company was founded and have never encountered such treatment before. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss matters further and to learn of how you propose to prevent a similar situation from recurring. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

*V. Angry*

V. Angry

RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

### Joint negotiation of text



RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Pedagogical sequence**

**Teacher:** Jesús Fernando García Castro

**Group:** Denver

**Unit:** 4

**Genre:** Blog

**Lesson Aim:** To post a blog entry about your last vacation.

Stage	Sub stage	Procedure		Time	Materials
		What the teacher does	What the students do		
<b>Warm-up</b>		T will first explain what a blog is, then show different pictures from blog entries that are of interesting and outstanding moments in people's lives.	Ss will describe each blog, how similar or different they are and give a title or headline that best suits each.	15 minutes	Laptop, screen
<b>Modeling</b>	1st	-T will provide an example of a blog. And signal its different parts.		20 minutes	Laptop, display,
<b>Joint negotiation</b>		- T will provide the	Ss will choose the	30 minutes	Laptop, word processing

RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED  
APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

<b>of text</b>		same situations of the warm-up.	situation they prefer and in groups following the model provided by the teacher they will write the different parts of the blog.		software, display,
<b>Independent construction of text</b>			Ss will create their own blogs about their last vacations using pictures and different multimedia if possible, they will use Google Docs in order to create it and follow the model.	30 minutes	Laptop, smartphone, Google Docs

**Warm-up**



RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.





RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.



**Modeling:**

## RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

### How to Write a Blog Post in Five Easy Steps [Summary]:

1. Step 1: Plan your blog post by choosing a topic, creating an outline, conducting research, and checking facts.
2. Step 2: Craft a headline that is both informative and will capture readers' attentions.
3. Step 3: Write your post, either writing a draft in a single session or gradually word on parts of it.
4. Step 4: Use images to enhance your post, improve its flow, add humor, and explain complex topics.
5. Step 5: Edit your blog post. Make sure to avoid repetition, read your post aloud to check its flow, have someone else read it and provide feedback, keep sentences and paragraphs short, don't be a perfectionist, don't be afraid to cut out text or adapt your writing last minute.

### Seven Earth-like Planets Discovered In Milky Way - Continuous Disclosure

[Home](#) » [alien life](#) » [Alien Planet](#) » [Continuous Disclosure](#) » Seven Earth-like Planets Discovered In Milky Way - Continuous Disclosure



In another major step towards continuous disclosure, this time researchers have announced the discovery of seven Earth-like planets orbiting a small star in our own galaxy.



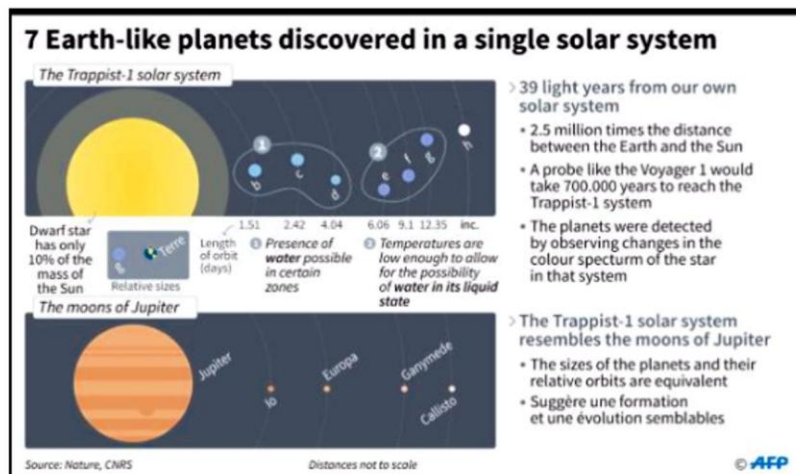
An artist's conception of what the surface of the exoplanet TRAPPIST-1f. NASA/JPL-Caltech)

All seven roughly match the size and mass of our own planet and are almost certainly rocky, and three are perfectly perched to harbour life-nurturing oceans of water, they reported in the journal Nature.

Most critically, their proximity to Earth and the dimness of their red dwarf star, called Trappist-1, will allow astronomers to parse each one's atmosphere in search of chemical signatures of biological activity.

"We have made a crucial step towards finding life out there," said co-author Amaury Triaud, a scientist at the University of Cambridge.

## RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.



The Trappist-1 system, a mere 39 light years distant, has the largest number of Earth-sized planets known to orbit a single star.

It also has the most within the so-called "temperate zone" -- not so hot that water evaporates, nor so cold that it freezes rock-solid.

The discovery adds to growing evidence that our home galaxy, the Milky Way, may be populated with tens of billions of worlds not unlike our own -- far more than previously suspected.

Keywords: exoplanets, other planets, other solar systems, TRAPPIST-1, Earthlike planets, Disclosure

### Joint negotiation of text

### Independent construction:

RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

**4<sup>th</sup> Pedagogical sequence**

**IDENTIFICATION**

**Teacher:** Jesús Fernando García Castro

**Group:** Denver

**Unit:** 5

**Genre:** Blog

**Lesson Aim:** To express opinions and critics using blogs.

Stage	Sub stage	Procedure		Time	Materials
		What the teacher does	What the students do		
<b>Warm-up</b>	Interview chart	The teacher will show an interview chart which has some predefined questions about restaurants and type of food	Learners will answer to the questions in the interview orally, then share with their partners	15 minutes	laptop, Google docs
<b>Modeling</b>	Context: A blogger writes an entry about a restaurant in the city	T will divide the class in groups then will provide the blog cut-out.	First: Students should be in groups. Second: students will organize the text depending on its genre (blog)	20 minutes	laptop, screen, cut-outs

RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED  
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<b>Joint negotiation of text</b>	Context: the topic will be related to touristic sites	T will provide Ss with a chart to ease the creation of a blog entry.	Ss will write blog entries using Google Docs, learners should follow the model.	25 minutes	Laptop, Google Docs
<b>Independent construction of text</b>			Ss will create a blog entry about opinions and critis of another experience in a restaurant.	30 minutes	Laptop, Google Docs

**Warm-up:**



## opinions about restaurants



### Qs:

1. What kinds of restaurants do you like most?
2. How often do eat out?

- Now, read the sentences below. Circle the numbers that best express your opinions.
- Then, compare your answers with your classmates. Give reasons.

Eating out at restaurants is fun.	1	2	3	4	5
Fast food is delicious.	1	2	3	4	5
Restaurant food is healthy.	1	2	3	4	5
Eating out at restaurants is better than staying at home to eat.	1	2	3	4	5
Owning a restaurant would be fun.	1	2	3	4	5
All restaurants should be completely non-smoking.	1	2	3	4	5
There are many good restaurants close to your school.	1	2	3	4	5
Eating out at restaurants is too expensive. It's a waste of money.	1	2	3	4	5
It would be great to work in a restaurant as a chef.	1	2	3	4	5
In the future, people will not eat at home – only in restaurants.	1	2	3	4	5
It would be great to work in a restaurant as a waiter or waitress.	1	2	3	4	5
Cooking is fun.	1	2	3	4	5

### POSSIBLE ANSWERS

- 5 I agree completely
- 4 I mostly agree
- 3 I'm not sure
- 2 I mostly disagree
- 1 I disagree completely



## RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

### Modeling:



-Whenever you are in Barranquilla, feel free to eat the best food from Colombia, it might be on the street or at malls, but there's one thing for certain, Varadero restaurant cannot be missed.

#### - The place where the sea comes to your dish

- According to different customers the attention may not be the best one but the food is a delight.

The parts which have to be organized:

1 Headline – 2 Picture/video/multimedia file – 3 intro – 4 opinion of blogger.

### Joint negotiation of text

Places	Headline	Headline	Comparisons
cities			people? / exciting?
stadiums			old? / big?
skyscrapers			tall? / modern?
universities			expensive? / students?

### Independent construction of text:

RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED  
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In this first e-mail there was a request for a new design of an outfit, but the customer wasn't able to find it in the shopping mall, the main objective is to ask for the request.

to: santiago  
subject: new design

Hi santiago  
thanks for reading my email, im looking for the new desing of Ralph lauren but i cant find in my city

I need to buy two sweaters and shorts, also i want the last shoes that ralph lauren release, so i would charge the money, you buy them and send me when you are avaliabe

thanks for the favor and give my regards to your mom, see you in one month

thanks

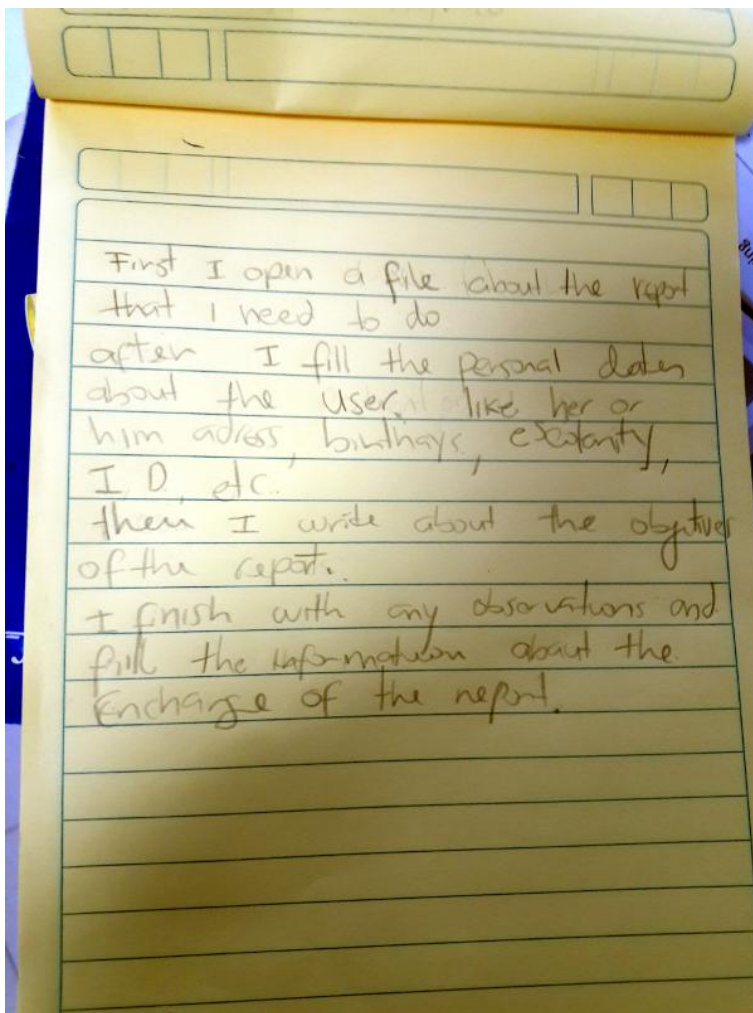
adriana



## RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

### Appendix B: Evidences of implementation

In this second exercise, one of the engineers was asked how to do a report and whether she would give instructions on how to correctly fill them out. This was done in order to have an example of how reports are done at her workplace



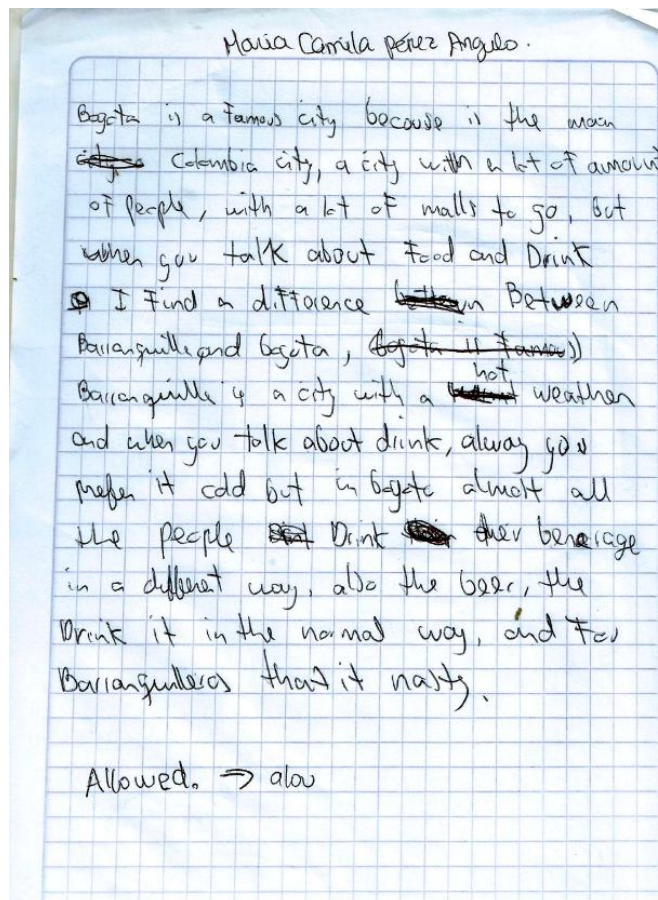
## RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

In this picture we can watch the teacher making use of the different technological tools at classes, such as opensource O.S. and an adaptation of the software which the course book includes.



RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

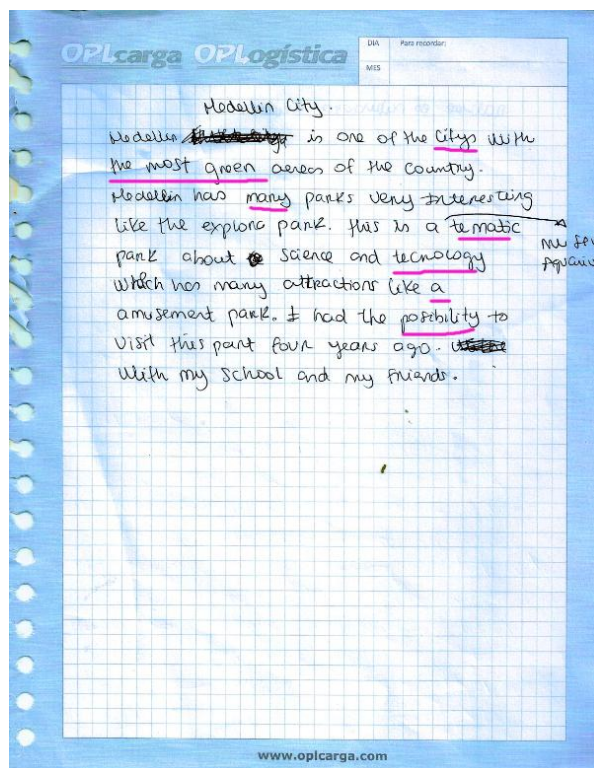
Students' production



In the second picture we can see another example of the same exercise, this learner has a higher level, but just like in the first picture they still present some failures especially because they write as they speak, this is the main issue due to the fact that the language center's

methodology encourages more the oral skills and activities related to this one than writing.

In this image of a student's production it is important to highlight the fact that it was done in a traditional way without a text-processor app, the aim of the exercise was to describe a city, and its culture. It's very interesting to see how learners sort the ideas of what to write first, second, third etcetera.



## RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

De: W.pbolguemann@gmail.com

Para: teacher8@speaklc.com

Asunto: clothe design request

Párrafo Anchura variable

To Pat-primo

Hi, I'm a client from the city of Barranquilla, Colombia. I have been searching for a T-shirt design of this brand, it is especial because it is good for the warm temperatures. the main problem is that I don't know how to call this type of clothe. I really hope you are able to send here the design.

yours truly,

Whitney Bolqueman

Inglés (Estados Unidos)

In the second evidence we can see that some learners go straight to the point, this usually happens with engineers due to the fact that in their academical life and professional career they usually are more in contact with numbers and less text production even in the L1.

clothe request

teacher8@speaklc.com

clothe request

To Koaj

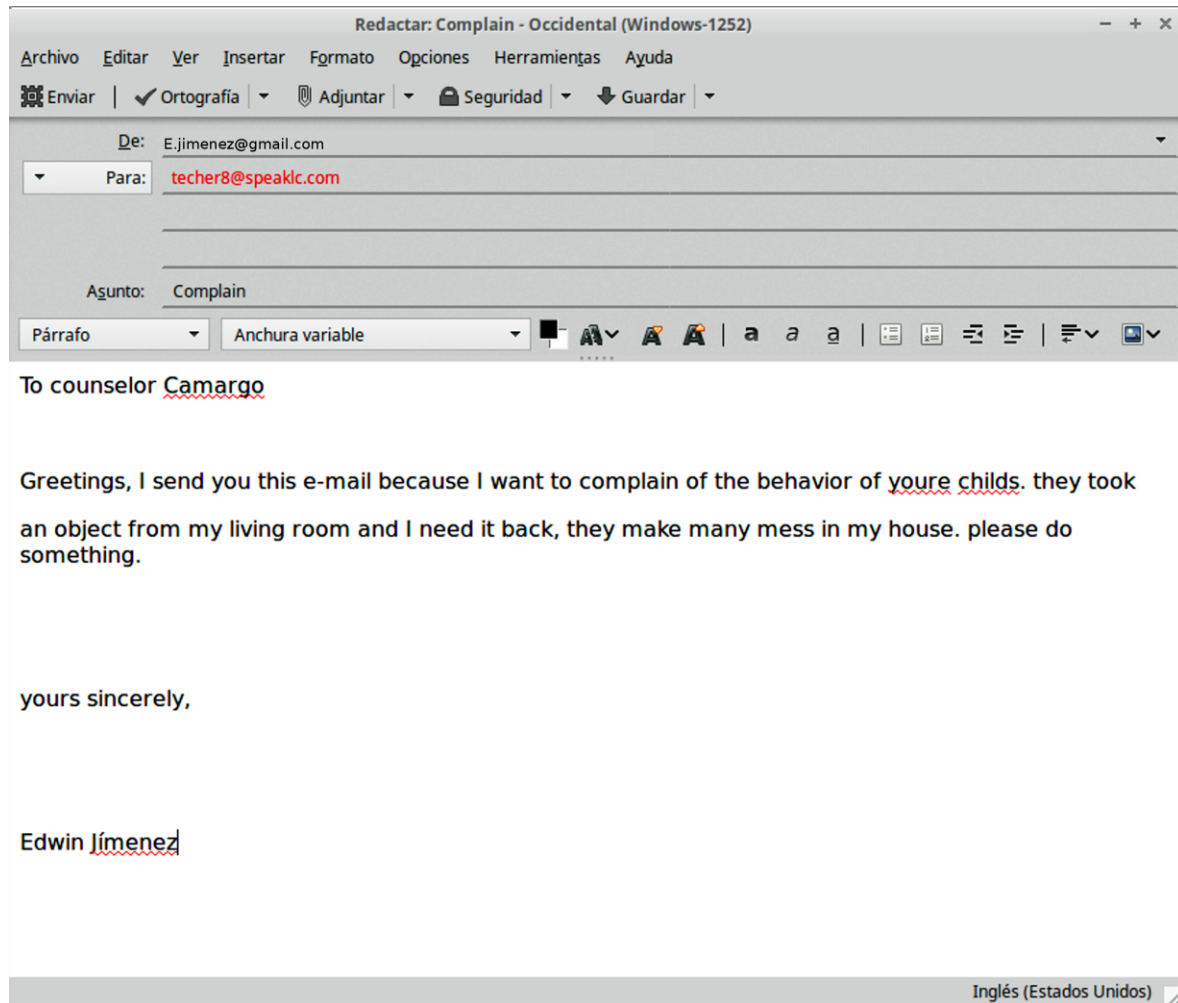
Greetings, I am sending you this e-mail because I am a client from barranquilla. in the locals of portal del prado last week, i didn't find a design of jeans that are now in. it is the stail actually. So please send them.

yours sincerely

Sol Muñoz.

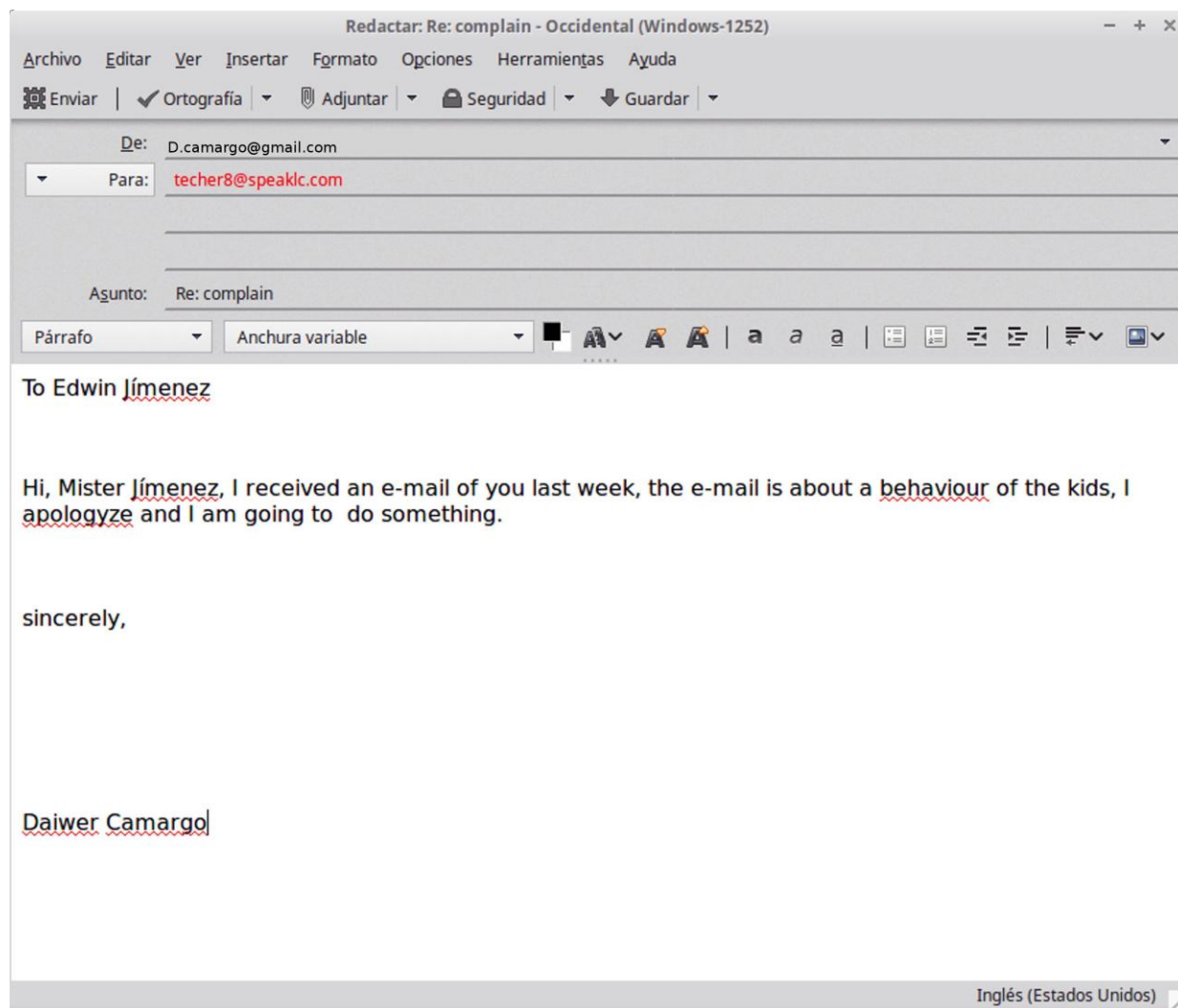
## RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

### Pedagogical sequence 2:





RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.



In this other task we see the same pattern, this learner who wrote this reply to the complain also goes straight to the point, and he is also an engineer, this can also be a coincidence.

RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.



This picture was taken at Basilica Catedral Primada de Santa Fe de Bogotá.

I have wanted always to travel to Cundinamarca because I have family living there so the cost of the travel is less. Once I had a discussion with my sister,

Here we can see how learners have improved, the mistakes are very common, mistakes related to language, to vocabulary and the inevitable inclusion of the L1.

RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED  
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because she prefers to know other places than Colombia, I told her that first I must know my country.



There I had a good time and relaxed a lot. The weather was cool and the air was fresh.

I ate many things that came from el campo.

The errors have decreased but still some minor errors related to the well use of conjunctions appear.



RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

**Food right on the table?... I don't think so**

Are you planning to eat out on Mother's day? I suggest you to think two times



It was not a normal day, it was Mother's day, in the house my brothers and my sister were very excited because we were eating out all of us, all the house, all the family.

The time running, the idea was originated by my older brother Paulo, poor Paulo, his idea was good not the time.

This is the blog of a different learner, although she has some errors we can see the improvement, and the mistakes are interesting due to the fact that they are related to the L1, e.g. In the Title there is a small mistake related to the use of once, twice. Because they are similar to Spanish learners tend to make this error but the idea remains there so this means that the usage of word processor can help them to correct and learn faster those small mistakes.

RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.



we arrived to the restaurant at 11 a.m. and it was full, there was a lot of persons, the catering service was very bad.

Waiters were running and there was no table for us.

My opinion is that when it is Mother's day do not go to restaurants.

Another mistake can be highlighted and it includes just like in the previous one the L1. In spite of all these, the main aim was achieved which was to express their opinions or critics about a situation in a restaurant in which they have experienced by using the narrative tenses and following the model of the genre.

## **RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.**

### **Appendix C: Teacher's journal**

#### **First pedagogical sequence, Tuesday, September 12<sup>th</sup> 2017**

As it is usual in the language center you have to wait for the group to be assigned to you so that the class can be prepared, this is one of the different issues I've had while doing my research, because the schedule changes often. The approach in the language center is a communicative-based approach, with a lot of emphasis on the oral skills, with a customized or personalized type of class because there are up to 8 students per group, this can be very advantageous given the fact that the teacher can focus in the failures of learners and improve them.

In our first class of the research I had to explain them that they were going to be object of a research to improve their writing skills, most of them were in agreement, but only one demanded not to show her tasks. In the first part when I gave away the different cut-outs and demanded them to do some collaborative work it was interesting to see how learners communicate and loose the fear or shame of doing any mistake in the L2 while playing or participating. Another interesting aspect is that of the feeling of competition when they work together using in this case an e-mail app, the class becomes much funnier and less boring.

A negative aspect happened when one of the students had problems handling the app Thunderbird which is an e-mail client; I encouraged them to use it because its interface and options are very similar to the e-mail clients which they use at their jobs.

A very good aspect is that of looking for new vocabulary, the teacher encouraged the students to look for definitions in English not translations to the mother tongue, the main objective is to show learners how to think in the L2, this pedagogical sequence took 2 sessions.

#### **Second pedagogical Sequence Monday, September 25<sup>th</sup> 2017**

## RUNNING HEAD: ENHANCING THE WRITING SKILL THROUGH THE USE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND ONLINE ENGAGING TOOLS.

Today it rained a lot, students arrived 10 to 15 minutes late, something positive is that it was Monday which means that learners had full energy. First I explained them about the genre, which is the same, e-mail but today's task is different, the main goal is to correctly write a reply, so I asked them "What do you understand by reply?" all of the students knew or had idea of what a reply is, as this was the same genre but with a slight difference related to the model. The class took two sessions, but this was due to the fact that at the language center, we, teachers should follow a paceline, this means that by a specific time the students should have already seen a certain unit or page, so I had to stop with the pedagogical sequence after 50 minutes which is when the 10 minutes break begin.

### **Wednesday, September 27<sup>th</sup> 2017, II session**

In this session we moved forward to having the task done, before this, when doing the task of sending a reply in to a department store, it was interesting to see how girls were more interested than men. When giving them the topic which is replying the students who are engineers did a signal with their face as if the exercise was closely related to their jobs, but then after explaining and contextualizing what the reply was about the ambience in the classroom changed, learners used the tools such as wordreference when they didn't know the meaning of a word and the same app of the previous session.

### **Third Pegagogical Sequence, November 16<sup>th</sup> 2017**

The group has had some changes, they have improved a lot, one of the main issues in the language center is also one of its main advantages and that is the capability of choosing their own schedule, this means that the schedule changes weekly, sometimes it remains the same, some other times there has to be a change, and this is why there cannot be a sequence with one group, that is another policy, the teachers rotate, we never teach the same group three classes or four classes in a row. This group had a break of two weeks, they had to begin on November 13<sup>th</sup> 2017 but due to some

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personal problems of one of the students they re-started today, on November 16<sup>th</sup> 2017.

The genre which is blog is not new to them but most of them had never written on a blog or expressed their opinions or critics in a blog, they have commented but not writing their own blog. In order to break the ice different pictures with vacations or happy moments of people's lives were shown on a display, first, learners watched the pictures, then, in pairs shared their ideas, after doing so they were asked to write on a piece of paper their thoughts on each picture, I asked them how different or similar it was to talk and to think and organize your ideas before writing.

The main objective of this pedagogical sequence is to build a blog talk about their last vacations. This sequence took two seasons due to the time limit.

### **Fourth Pedagogical sequence, Monday 20<sup>th</sup> 2017**

In this pedagogical sequence students had to follow the same genre along with some instructions and protocols which every blog should have provided by the teacher, the main idea is to express opinions and critics using a blog, at first it was difficult because this group of learners are not used to use blogs in order to critic or express their opinions, usually as most of the people, learners make use of blogs to download music, movies, pictures, etcetera, but through this it can be shown that a blog has more uses. As the sequence passed students found interesting to express their opinions, using this tool. Also the fact of having the chance to know people that have the same type of thoughts as you really creates a good environment for studying.

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**Appendix D: Students' Online Survey**

**Survey of writing using online engaging tools**

P1 ¿Consideras adecuada la manera como el profesor preparó cada una de sus clases? de ser No la respuesta escribe por qué.

Si: \_\_\_\_

No:

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P2 ¿Estás satisfecho/a con la forma de dar las clases del profesor: presentación y trabajo con los materiales, forma de evaluar, forma de organizar el trabajo individual, en pareja y en grupo, forma de motivar al alumnado? Di SI o NO. En caso de que tu respuesta sea NO, explica por qué.

Si: \_\_\_\_

No: \_\_\_\_

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P3 ¿Sientes que has mejorado tu parte de writing?

Si: \_\_\_\_

No: \_\_\_\_

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P4: ¿Crees que las clases van ligadas a tus necesidades profesionales?

Si: \_\_\_\_

No: \_\_\_\_

P5: ¿Te gustó el material que recibiste? (e-mails, blogs) ¿qué le mejorarías?

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P6: ¿Crees que analizar un modelo de email te facilitó la escritura de tu propio email?

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P7:¿Consideras que el proceso de escribir conjuntamente con tu profesor te hizo más fácil escribir  
luego tu propio email?

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P8: ¿Crees que el hecho de seguir un modelo de texto dependiendo del genero te ha ayudado en  
mejorar tu redacción en Inglés?

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P9: ¿qué dificultades tuviste durante el proceso de escritura?

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P10: ¿qué ventajas o beneficios pudiste percibir con la forma en la que se dieron las clases?

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### **Author's Biography**

The author of this research Jesús Fernando García Castro was born in Puerto Colombia, Atlántico. He studied high school at Instituto Pestalozzi (Pedagogy laboratory of Universidad del Atlántico). He managed to do his first studies related to English language at the age of 11 at Praxis Laboratory, then at the age of 14, he entered in the English courses of Universidad del Norte where he managed to finish the Ingles para Jovenes course. Later, after finishing this first step he did different courses and learnt about computers and technology especially software based on open source technologies. When he was 18 years old, he began a French course in the Alliance Francaise where he reached level B2. While doing this course, the researcher studied Licenciatura en Idiomas Extranjeros at Universidad del Atlántico. Currently the researcher works at Hablemos Speak Language Center where he teaches English and French.